



Spaces of Experience

Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000

Charlotte Klonk

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Frontispiece: Arnold Bode, display of a sculpture by Gustav H. Wolff
and paintings by Giorgio Morandi at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.
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Pg. vi: Philip Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone, entrance of
the Museum of Modern Art on 53rd Street in New York, 1939.
Photo: © 2005 Timothy Hursley courtesy The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



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Acknowledgements

This book began in my mind fifteen years ago. I was at the time working in a contemporary art museum in Belgium. Hanging pictures, I soon came to understand, was an art in its own right. It demanded an excellent eye and powerful vision. Yet there were certain parameters that could not be altered – walls were white, pictures were hung in a single row, and rooms were kept more or less empty. Exceptions were made only when artists came in to install their own works. Then, everything was possible. Walls might be coloured and crammed with items; floors could be cluttered and the spectators' senses assaulted. I realised that these standards (together with when it would be permissible to violate them) were not historically immutable, and I set myself the task of researching their roots and reasons. A Junior Research Fellowship at Christ Church, Oxford, gave me the first opportunity to do so in 1995. Later, the University of Warwick granted me a year-long sabbatical to explore archives in Germany and the United States, and the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation generously financed this. The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin provided a congenial environment for putting my findings into context, and, finally, the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin gave me the intellectual freedom to finish the manuscript. My current home institution, the Art History Department at the Humboldt University of Berlin, has been a wonderfully stimulating place to complete the project and set off to new intellectual shores. I am glad to have the opportunity here to express my gratitude to all those institutions and their communities.

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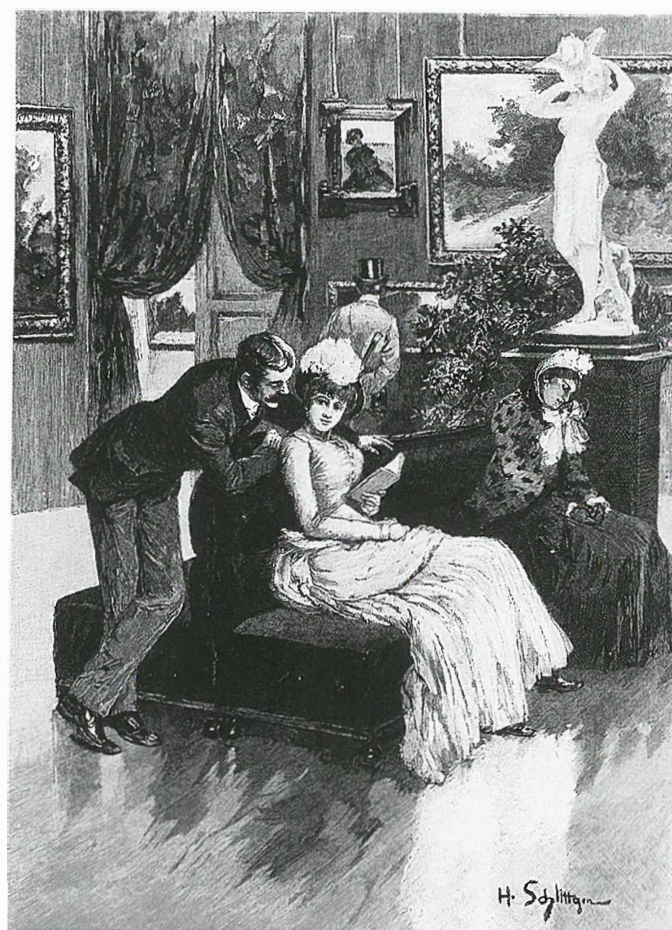
My deepest gratitude, however, is due to two people who, I think, will not know how much I owe to them. Lorraine Daston has discussed my research patiently with me almost from its outset, responded with deep knowledge to questions, kept the conversation going over the years and commented inspiringly on the final draft of the manuscript. I have learnt more from her than from anybody else in the past decade. The mistakes and misconceptions remain in the book despite her well-intentioned efforts. Finally, I want to thank my daughter, Leah, from the bottom of my heart. I was pregnant with her when I wrote the earliest draft of the first chapter. Now ten years old, Leah is convinced that she has seen enough art galleries to last a lifetime. If, one day, the book can convey to her what attracted her mother to all those museums in the first place, I would be very happy.

Introduction

There are many reasons why people go to galleries.¹ The literary historian Stephen Greenblatt goes in search of 'visual wonder centred on the aesthetic masterpiece'; the art historian James Elkins wants to be moved to tears.² In *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë's heroine Lucy Snow, on the other hand, visits museums as part of a bid for freedom; freedom from being told what to think and what to do: 'I dearly liked to be left there alone.'³ Ultimately, she is looking for an opportunity to define her own sense of womanhood. Unaccompanied, Lucy looks at whatever catches her attention only to discover that none of the images of womanhood on display tallies with her own sense of self. Neither the voluptuous abandonment of a half-naked Cleopatra nor the meticulous renderings of dutiful daughters and housewives seem to her adequate representations of her own experience. While the gallery in this case is part of the visitor's quest for self-identity, more than a hundred years later it allowed Julian Barnes's male heroes in *Metroland* to go in search of other people's identities. Instead of looking at the pictures, Christopher and Tony go to the National Gallery in London to observe the visitors and fantasise about their lives.⁴

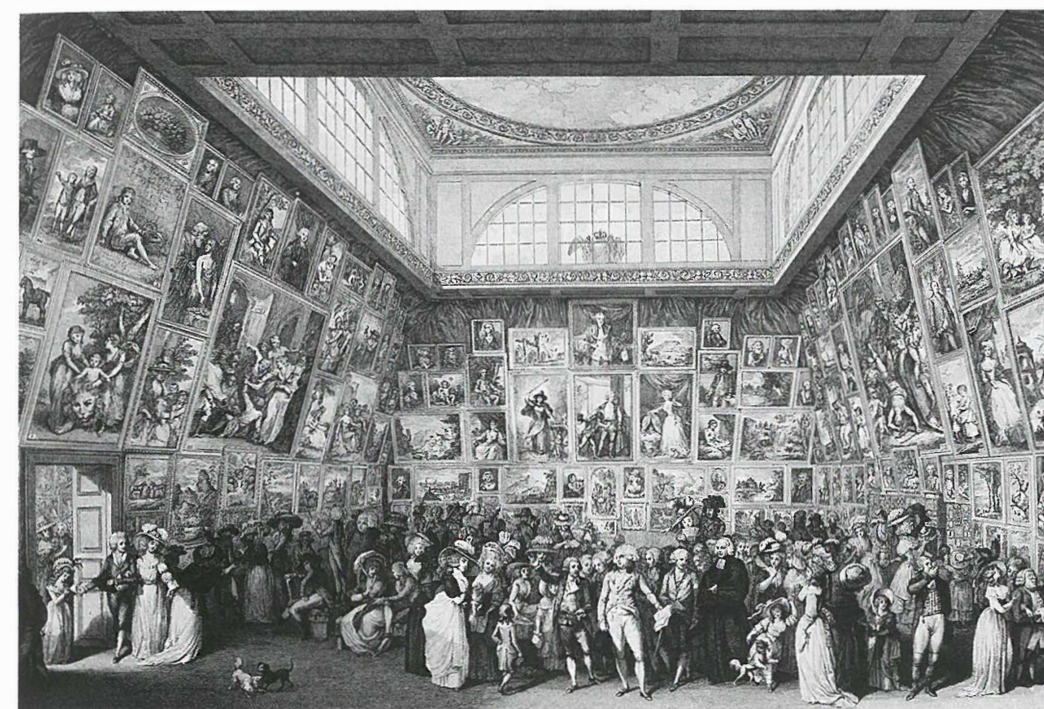
The idea that not all visitors are there to look at the pictures goes back a long way. In the early nineteenth century curators at the National Gallery complained that mothers came there solely to teach their children to walk,⁵ while Jean-Luc Godard, in the following century, staged a race through the Louvre in his film of 1964, *Bande à part*. For Godard it was doubtless a matter of showing his audience, which had already learned to walk, the obsolescence of static image contemplation in the age of film. His three masterful pan-shots, that slide past *chefs-d'œuvre* like David's *Oath of the Horatii* and Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, although not lingering on them, have made film history.

Neither film nor television has been able to dislodge the attraction of the self-absorbed, lingering gaze in the museum. Seeing and being seen, it seems, are able to mobilise desires that have given rise to the most enduring of all museum experiences: amorous encounters of one sort or another. From the eighteenth century to the present day, flirtation figures prominently in stories about museum visits. Soon after the art academies had opened their



1 Hermann Schlittgen, *Kunst und Liebe*. From *Fliegende Blätter*, vol. 83, no. 2085 (1885), p. 13.

annual exhibitions to a fee-paying public, they acquired the reputation of being hunting-grounds for sexual 'pick-ups'. The English eighteenth-century journalist James Stephen, for example, relates a friend's experience of this kind in his *Memoirs*.⁶ A friend of Stephen, a simple clerk to an attorney, was apparently explicitly and repeatedly approached by the son of a lord.⁷ The incident led to a David and Goliath court case. The clerk accused the young aristocrat of accosting him; the latter sued for libel. In the end, after a prolonged struggle against the power and influence of a noble family and a corrupt magistrate, the clerk was vindicated. But the reputation of museums as places of sexual encounter was not to go away. The German caricaturist Hermann Schlittgen published an image in the satirical magazine *Fliegende Blätter* in 1885 that shows a man making advances to a seated young woman under a statue of *Venus and Cupid* (pl. 1). As the gentleman worries that her mother might notice them, the caption tells us that her response is calm. Her mother, she explains, always sleeps soundly at art exhibitions. We are left in no doubt that this is neither a first nor an unexpected approach. Not surprisingly then, more recently, one of



2 Johann Heinrich Ramberg, *Visit of the Prince of Wales to Somerset House in 1787*, 1787, coloured engraving (P. A. Martini), 32 × 49.5 cm.

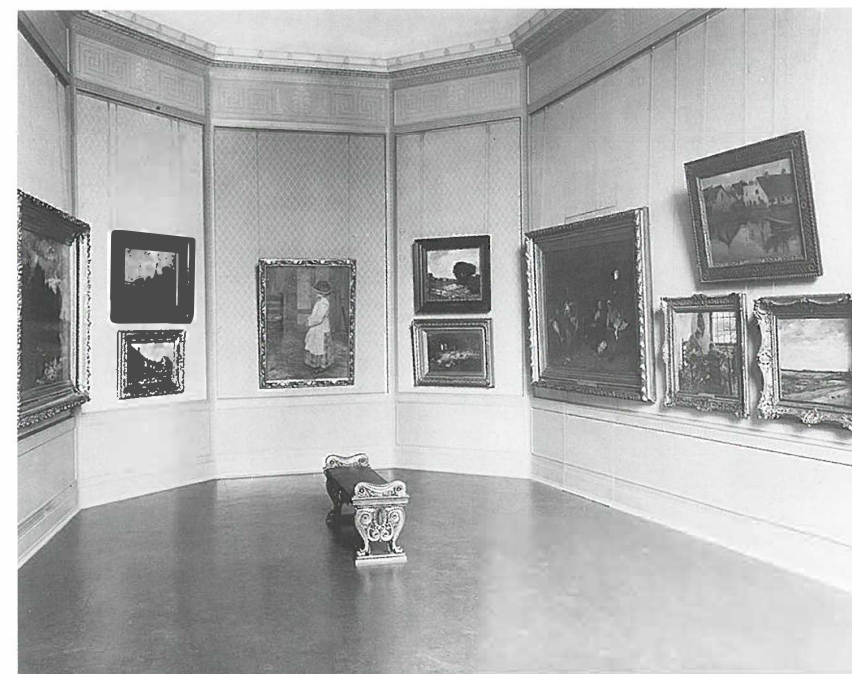
the girls in the hugely popular North American TV series *Sex and the City* begins one of her love affairs in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.⁸

This book is about none of these experiences specifically. The experience with which I am concerned here is larger and more general, if no less concretely embodied in the actual museum spaces. It partakes of many aspects of each of the above – the attempt, for example, to acquire a sense of identity – but goes beyond the individual to the collective self that societies have found worthy of cultivation. What kind of visitor experience is at stake, I ask, in the changes from a display like this (pl. 2) to a display like this a hundred years later (pl. 3), to this (pl. 4), to this (pl. 5), to this (pl. 6) and to this (pl. 7)? How have Western cultures used the art gallery since the eighteenth century to conceptualise the nature of subjective experience, its value and its relationship to the ideal of society pursued at the time? Museums are peculiarly situated on the border between the public and the private – the contemplation of art is supposed to be a rather intimate and personal act, while museums as institutions have a public responsibility. Thus they are ideal spaces for a study that is interested in a cultural history of experience. The cultural values of an age are inscribed in such spaces, while the way in which they are experienced is dependent on the subjective responses of their visitors.



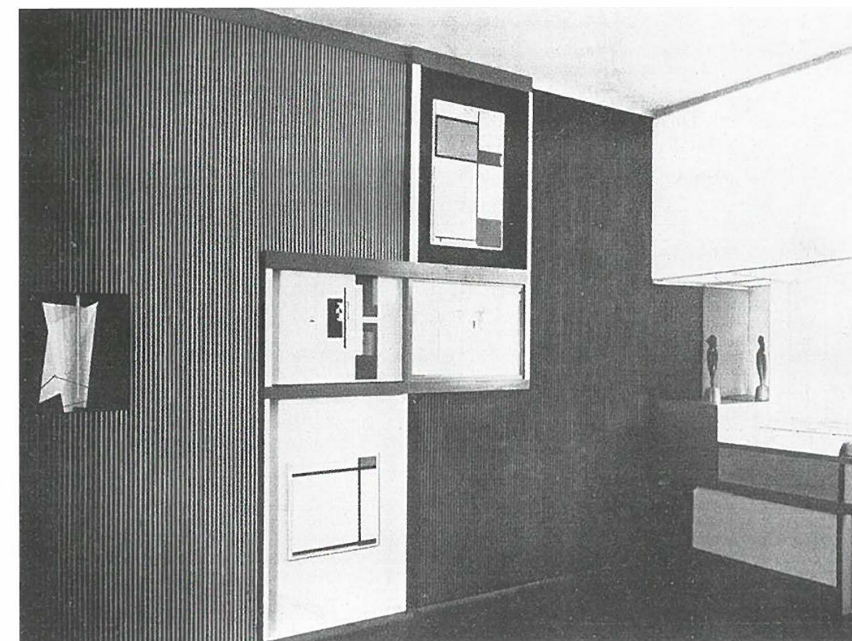
3 Giuseppe Gabrielli, *The National Gallery, 1886: Interior of Room 32*, 1886, oil on canvas, 44 × 56 cm. Government Art Collection.

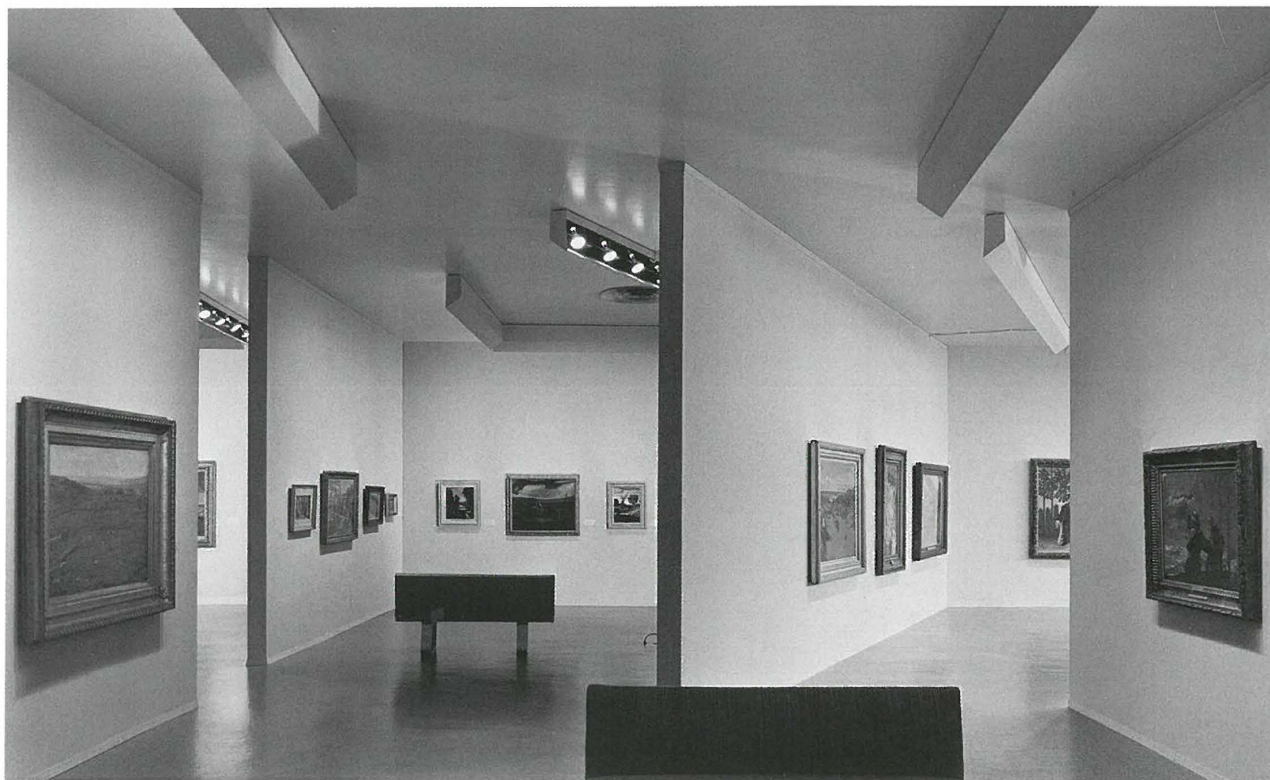
Yet, there are some limitations in my choice of subject. First, I confine myself to art exhibitions in order to give some focus to an already very broad subject, not because they are uniquely suited to a history of subjectivity.⁹ There is also a geographical limit inherent in the subject: public art galleries are a European invention that spread first to the United States and then to other parts of the world. But even today they are of limited use, for example, in African countries as vehicles for the expression of collective identity. Whereas the educated middle classes in Europe and the US have used museums to forge a sense of themselves, this has not been the case in many parts of the world where museums were a legacy of the colonial powers. Hence my study is confined to Europe and the United States and, even more specifically, to the metropolises of London, Berlin and New York. Why not Paris,



4 Ludwig Justi, display of work by German Secession artists on the first floor of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, 1914.

5 El Lissitzky, 'Abstract Cabinet' in the Landesmuseum, Hanover. From *Die Form*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1928), p. 112.





6 Alfred Barr, installation view of the exhibition *Painting, Sculpture, Prints* in the series *Art in Our Time* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1939.

St Petersburg, Milan, the reader might ask, or indeed any number of cities where an innovative art gallery at one time or other existed? During the writing of this book I have often discussed my selection with colleagues. In more than one case they have come up with an example that would have been worthwhile to include here. I will say more about what motivated my choice below. For the moment it must suffice to say that it is the story of the emergence of the white cube and its dominance in the twentieth century that is at the heart of the book and I am keen to show that powerful alternatives existed prior to this. The galleries discussed are chosen because they help to chart this development.

There is one further aspect. No doubt women have been galleries' most loyal and frequent visitors from the moment they opened their doors in the early nineteenth century. Traditionally, this had to do with the fact that middle-class women did not work and were thus better able to visit galleries when they were open (art galleries started opening late only after the general introduction of electric light around 1900, although arts and crafts museums pioneered this practice in the 1860s, with the introduction of gas lighting). The first director of the National Gallery, Charles Eastlake, for example, argued that the



7 Arnold Bode, display of work by Marc Chagall on the upper floor at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.

National Gallery should charge entrance fees on at least certain days of the week so that the ladies of London, its most frequent visitors during the morning hours, would not be inconvenienced by less polite elements.¹⁰ In the 1930s an independent report advised the Museum of Modern Art in New York to label itself a business, based on rational and objective principles, in order to wrest the institution from its association with feminised private spaces. The gendered aspect of spectatorship will thus be a recurrent theme throughout the book. But I am concerned with it only to the extent that it informs a general conception of experience.

Arguably, the notion of the spectator as citizen that emerged in the nineteenth century excluded women on the basis that they lacked voting rights (despite the fact that they clearly outnumbered men in the galleries), but by 1900 there were some who saw women as the prime target group of the art gallery – for example, the director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Alfred Lichtwark – while others, such as the famous art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, hoped to establish the museum as the domain of an exclusively male stratum of aesthetes. Yet the notion of the spectator as consumer that has come to dominate in museums as elsewhere, and which emerged with the rise of what the historian Lizabeth Cohen has called a ‘Consumers’ Republic’ in 1930s America and post-war Europe, does not differentiate between men and women.¹¹ The overriding ambition behind this book is not the tracing of individual experiences, or that of particular groups, however significant, but the nature of the general understanding of experience at work in the changing displays of art in the Western world since the eighteenth century.

Experience

Like the museum, ‘experience’ is a category that straddles the boundaries of the personal and the public. Etymologically, the word derives from the Latin *experientia* denoting ‘trial, proof or experiment’. In French and Italian the words *expérience* and *esperienza* can still refer to scientific experiments and, from the seventeenth century onwards, reliable experience was deemed indispensable for establishing scientific truth and universal certainty. For thinkers like Bacon and Descartes, who endeavoured to create a ‘scientific method’ for the pursuit of truth, experience was important when it was shared and public rather than private and ephemeral. Yet, from Rousseau and Goethe onwards the term has most often been used to capture concrete, sensual and more or less intuitive responses to the world. Here, the notion of experience designates what exceeds concepts (and, perhaps, even language) and marks what is evanescent and individual.¹² It took on enormous importance in nineteenth-century historiography as an analytical category in the work of the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, since it could bring together both the subjective and the trans-subjective. Dilthey distinguished between a notion of experience as ‘mere intellectual activity’ and a deeper level of interiority that encompassed the whole ‘willing – feeling – perceiving being’.¹³ It was this inner experience that Dilthey privileged in the writing of history, both as its object of enquiry and as providing a guide for the historian in seeking to understand the past. Rather than leading to a loss of its public discussion, as one might fear with such an inti-

mate and individual form of knowledge, the ability to undergo inner experience was a universal one, according to Dilthey – a fundamental life force shared by all – and through it the historian could gain access to human beings of the past. Dilthey, however, was merely elevating an already powerful term into a methodological category.

By Dilthey’s time public art galleries had been in existence for half a century. Direct experience of the past was a fundamental part of what they had to offer. The impetus behind public art galleries came with the founding of modern nation-states and the booming historical consciousness that paralleled their development. But the Romantics’ love affair with immediate inner knowing and the premium they placed on artwork in that process also played an important role in legitimising art galleries. Works of art appeared to offer access to the feelings of people from the past in a way that other historical documents did not. In that sense, the public art gallery and the notion of experience as an intellectual category had similar origins and gained strength from each other over time. Indeed, shortly after Dilthey made the term ‘experience’ central to the human sciences, German museums entered one of their liveliest and most experimental periods. Where previously the aesthetic experience of visual harmony was presented as producing a moral effect on visitors, the goal was now, echoing Dilthey, to develop a gallery experience that would be intuitive, intimate and, above all, would bring the inner, emotional self of the visitor into harmony with the display.

Yet there is, of course, a difference between stating that the rise of the art gallery and the concept of experience are historically connected and my use of the term as an analytical category. ‘Experience’, the historian Joan Wallach Scott has rightly warned, is often used by historians ‘to essentialize identity and reify the subject’.¹⁴ Far from making experience a universal unchanging category that allows us easy access to the past (by re-experiencing), as Dilthey and many others before and after him did, my starting point is the belief that experience is itself subject to social and historical forces. It is at least in this sense that we are able to analyse experience as historians. There are, no doubt, sensory experiences that are more rudimentary and more direct than this and others that are unconscious, but what we encounter as experience in the world’s practices and habits is the result of human activity and thus has a history. However, the experience at stake here is neither a universal form of experience nor the way various visitors have differently experienced art galleries. My focus is on the concepts of experience that informed those in charge of the museum displays. Changes in museum interiors – the colour of the background walls, lighting, the height and density of artworks displayed, furnishings (or lack thereof), dimensions and configuration of rooms, flow of visitors – were the product of more or less conscious ideas on the part of curators about what experience people should gain in the galleries. Far from being trans-historical, such concepts of experience are susceptible to quite dramatic change. It is in this sense that experience has a history, and gallery rooms are good places to find it.

* * *

The History of Display in Context

It might be surprising to some that I have not scavenged more through letters, diaries and memoirs to find individuals' accounts of their gallery experiences. But those that I did peruse I found to be disappointingly limited and predictable. Often the accounts confined themselves to the conventional tropes of gallery experience – the writer's rapture in beholding a masterpiece and the excitement of meeting a lover are perhaps the most common. Never did I come across what I would have wanted: sustained reflection on the space itself, its hanging and decoration and the impact this had on the self-awareness of the gallery visitor. And such is entirely unsurprising. This kind of reflection is not what we normally undertake when we go through a museum. It is something that becomes salient only within a larger historical context, where different experiences throw each other into relief. Moreover, my aim is not a history of individual but of collective experience, and here the value of such private evidence is problematic. My approach to this history then is twofold. On the one hand I enter into the details of gallery administration in order to identify who introduced what decorative scheme and – if possible – why. Answering these questions was much harder than I expected, because, historically, gallery staff, although they often thought it important to put on record *what* they showed, were much less concerned with *how* they showed it. I ask those readers who are not primarily interested in the institutional ins and outs of particular galleries to bear with me. This kind of detective work is a necessary basis for the larger claims this book makes about the historical nature of experience and the gallery room as an attempt to calibrate what Michael Baxandall once called the 'period eye'.¹⁵ They help me locate the people responsible for taking decisions and the considerations that moved them, thus allowing me to connect them to wider contemporary issues and discourses. I also examine two further contexts that contributed to the concepts of experience at stake in the galleries: science and the marketplace. The former gives a sense of how people conceptualised subjective experience and the processes of seeing, particularly in physiology and psychology, and the latter is an increasingly powerful space in which people undergo visual experiences.

To establish direct links between galleries, science, the street and shop windows, however tenuous they may sometimes appear, was important to me for two reasons. First, it avoids the infuriating practice of some cultural historians of producing surprising connections through a kind of association of ideas – as if they were characters in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*. Such connections, however striking, tell us more about our present preoccupations than how we can access the past. I, too, have my commitments: the book is written out of a belief in the present importance of museums. But I belong to the school of thought that holds that, while we can never access the past 'as it really was', our own standpoint should be used as a foil to bring into relief different habits and practices in the past and, in turn, to take these as a starting point from which to reflect upon our own present condition. For this, it is necessary to separate the past from our present interests as scrupulously as possible. I am keen to rehabilitate the conception of gallery experience (discussed in Chapter Three) that was proposed by avant-garde artists in the 1920s but would be all but forgotten ten years later. Their vision was of the museum as a truly public space, in contrast to the idea of it as a sanctuary for private contemplation, whose

disappearance is widely lamented today.¹⁶ Secondly, by focusing on connections rather than just seeing parallels I hope to convey a sense of how the history of experience is created by people with particular needs, interests and beliefs rather than being somehow passively and unwittingly reproduced by them, as if by magic, from some hidden Foucauldian episteme. This is where this book differs most from an important strand of the current literature on museums. In Tony Bennett's story of *The Birth of the Museum*, for example, the museum is identified as the face of the state, in whose service it sets out to civilise and control an emerging middle-class population. But how these values came about and why they were adopted by museums remains obscure.¹⁷ Not all histories of the institution, however, appear similarly agent-less. Many have been inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of museums as a place where social distinctions are articulated,¹⁸ and my research is indebted to this work.¹⁹ Displays in museums are the site of a number of contending interests, influences and pressures, some economic, others social, political and ideological, and I will be describing them here too.²⁰ But my focus is elsewhere. Instead of giving an account of how museums reproduce values, I will show how they tend to mould experience – the perception, behaviour and aesthetic, sometimes even political, judgement of spectators.²¹ It is important to note, however, that I am not claiming that these efforts were successful. To do so would be irresponsibly speculative. This kind of causation can never be proven.

What is collected and what narratives are told with this is another dominant strand of museum studies today.²² Again this is important but not central to my concern. It is less what museums show than how they show it that puts into place certain visions of experience and not others.²³ Moreover, to weave together gallery displays, the prevailing scientific understanding of human perception and the choreography of desires in the marketplace is a way of getting close to a kind of spatial history of experience that might otherwise be elusive. This takes the book in a different direction from those with which it hopes to share a shelf.

The connections between the gallery and other areas of interest to this study are not given equal treatment. In fact, their relative importance varies inversely. In the first chapter, which centres on national galleries in the early nineteenth century, the links to scientific debates were stronger than to the world of shops and shopping. This is still the case in the second chapter discussing the German museum reform movement around 1900, but begins to be reversed in the next chapter, on exhibitions in the 1920s. By the 1930s the gradual specialisation of the different disciplines and practices had begun to have an effect. Despite my research, I could not establish the existence of any significant links between those individuals who were influential in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and contemporary scientific research. From that point it was, above all, the commercial world that played the most significant role in determining the gallery experience – a state of affairs that is just as much the case today. Of course, there have always existed close links between museum architects and the design of shops. The architect of one of the most influential early art galleries, the Alte Museum in Berlin, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, planned a bazaar-like department store at the same time as he designed the art gallery in the late 1820s (pl. 8), and from Rem Koolhaas to Frank Gehry and Herzog and de Meuron, most of today's star



8 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, design for a department store 'Unter den Linden' in Berlin, 1827. From Gustav Adolf Patz, *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1927), p. 228.

museum architects have also designed department or luxury goods flagship stores.²⁴ But what has changed is the way in which the experience evoked in both types of building has merged. While in 1850 the two enterprises were markedly different, even if carried out by the same person, it is now possible to move from a museum to a shop merely by changing the contents – indeed this is precisely what happened with Rem Koolhaas's Prada Shop in SoHo, New York (pl. 9), originally designed to house a downtown branch of the Guggenheim. On the other hand, museum directors looked to scientific discussions of colour when they wanted to determine what the best background for their pictures would be; now they hand the job over to a designer. Science has, for the time being, ceased to be a determining or legitimating discourse for museum practice.

Each chapter in this book focuses on a significant case study that provides a springboard into the exploration of other relevant exhibitions and debates. They do not, as already mentioned, lay claim to comprehensiveness. I have not written an internal history of the different models of showing art. Most of the examples discussed here, however, count among the most innovative and influential for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An exception is the first chapter. This centres on the National Gallery in London in the early nineteenth century. Charles Eastlake, its first director, neither introduced new display strategies nor did he produce particularly innovative ordering principles. The decoration of the National Gallery is in this sense not pioneering but representative of the mainstream in the nineteenth century. But Eastlake's great theoretical awareness, in particular of visual physiology, and his extensive European connections allow an insight into the motivations behind nineteenth-century art gallery interiors that are unavailable elsewhere. Sources of this kind do not exist for the galleries in Dresden, Munich and Berlin. Moreover, no other European country instituted Parliamentary Inquiries into the affairs of museums. The many Select Committees that concerned themselves with the National Gallery in the 1830s and 1840s give a glimpse into the perceived social role and valuation of museum-going that are simply unavailable in the less democratic countries of continental Europe. They provide a gold mine for the kind of dense cultural history that I am attempting to write here. The next



9 Rem Koolhaas, the Prada Epicenter Store on Broadway, New York, 2001.

chapter, however, turns to a centre of innovation: the Nationalgalerie in Berlin around 1900. Here interior design and the German aesthetic reform movements, as well as the increasing influence of scientific psychology, provide the focus. It was here that the idea of the 'period room' originated, something that spread to other countries, despite being only a single episode during this time of intense experiment.²⁵ The third chapter addresses museum displays in the 1920s and the emergence of very different exhibition spaces. New spatial conceptions were articulated that owe a great deal to the popularisation of Einstein's Relativity Theory, as well as to radical ideals of collectivity. The fourth chapter shifts the focus to New York in the 1930s, where these European display experiments were transmuted into the conception of the art gallery as an adaptable container with bare white walls and a flexible, functional interior space. The sharp business sense of the Museum of Modern Art and its understanding of the role of the museum in modern capitalist markets led to its success and established the so-called white cube as the dominant idiom for international museums before the Second World War. Yet, as the fifth chapter will show, a distinctive late twentieth-century way of viewing emerged in Europe that transformed the white cube into an entertainment space. The chapter begins with a discussion of the 'Museum of 100 Days', the *Documenta*, in the West German town of Kassel, which has developed into one of the most important international art exhibitions since its inception in 1955. Typical of



10 Yoshio Taniguchi, new entrance at 54th Street to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 2004.

the post-war period was the rejection of the museum itself in favour of a new kind of institution, one not designed to preserve a permanent collection but to afford a stage for new and emerging art. The second part of this chapter examines a number of different recent museum designs. It concludes that the art experience that galleries offer is, with very few exceptions, amazingly standardised and departs little from what established itself in the 1930s. Some new art galleries are spectacularly innovative architectural experiments – the Guggenheim in Bilbao is surely the most striking – while others try to set down local roots by adapting to their settings – think, for example, of the way in which the newly opened extension to the Museum of Modern Art in New York has been made to fit so effortlessly into the skyline of mid-Manhattan (pl. 10). Yet behind this architectural diversity what is being offered inside is surprisingly uniform. Whether in Kyoto or San Francisco, Helsinki or Munich, the names of those star artists whose works the public flocks to see – the Picassos, Pollocks and Polkes – are largely the same, while the gallery interiors too are very similar: a series of passages from one subtly lit, spacious white room to another. This, I argue in the conclusion in Chapter Six, remains unchallenged by the inclusion of new media

into the gallery space. The lights are merely switched off and those spacious white rooms become black boxes – while the spectator experience intended remains the same.

The purpose of this book is to show that what we may now take for granted has not always been the case: that the history of showing art is as rich and varied as only the exteriors of museum buildings are now. To make the point more specifically, let us re-examine the sequence of images. Plate 2 shows the opening of an exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1787. The original drawing by Johann Heinrich Ramberg concentrates on the Prince of Wales's visit and the attendant visitors. The engraver, however, has located the ensemble in the Great Room at Somerset House. The walls are filled to the ceiling with pictures. The room is crowded with fashionable society. The prince, accompanied by the president of the Academy, Joshua Reynolds, is shown as part of the ensemble. Most of the audience is engaged in byplay around this central scene. They are artfully brought together in decorative groups that sweep through the room. In places, these groups form apexes, echoing the symmetrical hanging of the pictures on the wall, while in others they fill an irregular space, again like the paintings on the wall. Thus the diversity of the individuals who form the art public is shown to be part of a larger unity. In all their differences they appear in this composition as one large sweeping element that is formally and firmly tied to the surrounding space. It was not until the foundation of national galleries all over Europe fifty years later that a sense of individuality, both of the artworks on display and of the spectators in front of them, emerged. This is apparent in plate 3. Here the Italian artist Giuseppe Gabrielli has depicted what was then Room XIV in the National Gallery in London in 1886. The hanging on classic, nineteenth-century gallery red tapestry is still somewhat crowded, although an attempt has been made to bring the pictures closer to the visitors' eye level. Where a sense of the crowd dominated in the eighteenth-century engraving, here we are given an idea of the different characters that come to see the pictures. There are, for example, the serious young ladies on the right, the married couple seated in the middle ground, the grey-bearded husband and wife and their adult daughter in the foreground and the distinguished top-hatted gentlemen on the left. Yet all of them remain generic representatives of their types, much like the sixteenth-century Italian pictures on the wall. Where Titian is understood to give perfect expression to the values and beliefs of sixteenth-century Italy, so the bearded father with his wife and daughter are ideal representatives of Victorian England. The individuality of each is no more than an expression of the general conditions of the societies that gave rise to them. Individuality was encouraged in the nineteenth-century museum only on condition that the same set of visual and cultural determinants should govern all subjects in their respective periods and nations. What this amounted to was that viewers were addressed as citizens of ideal liberal nation-states, responsible individuals who shared a common set of moral and ethical values.

A less externally derived sense of subjectivity emerged around 1900. In plate 4 we see a room in the Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 1914. Pictures by contemporary Secession artists are displayed near to the spectator's eye level, either individually or, if the pictures are small cabinet paintings, one above the other. This intimate display is echoed in the silver-grey decor of the room, inspired by fashionable Art Nouveau interiors. It is clearly intended to evoke in the viewer an intimate, domestic sense of experience. Such an interiorised mode

of reception can be understood as a reaction by the liberal bourgeoisie to the loss of political power after 1878–9. Self-cultivation in the cultural and commercial arena became an alternative form of social engagement that eventually had its own political significance. The retreat into privacy was anathema, however, to avant-garde artists in the 1920s. Plate 5 shows the room for abstract art that the Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky created for the art gallery in Hanover in 1927–8. The paintings were displayed on metal slats, fixed orthogonally to the wall and painted black on one side and white on the other. As visitors walked through the room the background colour changed from white to grey to black. This changing viewing experience was enhanced by the mobility of the objects on display. Some paintings that were mounted on rails could be moved and a display case under the window turned. Thus the viewers' experience was the result not just of their engagement with the works on display but was also dependent on the actions of other visitors. El Lissitzky and Alexander Dorner, Hanover's gallery director, were not alone in rejecting individualistic modes of contemplation in favour of an active, collective viewing experience. Yet such experiments did not have any lasting impact on the gallery world.

After the opening of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1929, aspects of avant-garde experiments, such as the introduction of the white gallery wall and flexible ground plan, were taken up but transformed back towards an individualistic, contemplative mode of spectatorship. The tone, however, was notably different. As plate 6 shows, there was no return to the closed, intimate gallery room of the turn of the century. Partition walls were placed at angles in such a way that visitors would never have to retrace their steps. Although they were invited to pause briefly on the wooden benches provided in some of the cubicles, the dynamic and directed layout exerted an inevitable forward thrust. At the Museum of Modern Art, visitors were treated as part of a capitalist world in which, in Walter Benjamin's terms, homogenous time – here represented by the uniform gallery interior – is punctured by the ever-new, namely the stylistic innovations that give a restless sense of forward movement.²⁶ As historians of consumption have pointed out, it was in the 1930s that 'a wide range of people – from ordinary citizens to policymakers – began to recognize for the first time that consumer interests and behaviour had central economic and political consequences for American society'.²⁷ Many of those involved in the New Deal, from President Roosevelt down to low-level functionaries, came to believe that in an emerging society of mass consumption the application of the consumer's purchasing power would be crucial both for the achievement of economic prosperity and in the cause of democratic egalitarianism. For Roosevelt, equal political rights entailed equal access to the marketplace: 'If the average citizen is guaranteed equal opportunity in the polling place, he must have equal opportunity in the marketplace.'²⁸ Just as the newly emerging nation-states in the nineteenth century required citizens who were well-balanced individuals with shared moral values, so the consumer-oriented society that came into being in North America in the 1930s was in need of educated consumers whose choices in the marketplace would drive firms to produce better-quality products that would propel the country towards world economic leadership. In each case the art gallery contributed to the task. Whereas in the nineteenth century museum spectators were supposed to experience themselves as well-balanced individuals (an assumed prerequisite for moral behaviour), the Museum of Modern

Art in New York addressed its audience as consumers who would benefit from an education in the development of *taste*; the didactically presented historical progression of styles was intended to increase their aesthetic sensibility. As mass consumption spread to Europe after the Second World War, the Museum of Modern Art's conception of the spectator-as-consumer crossed the Atlantic too. But there was a crucial difference: instead of education, entertainment now began to dominate. In contrast to plate 6, plate 7 shows a room that has little in common with the sparse and didactic hang of the Museum of Modern Art. In fact, the way that the pictures are installed on floating plastic sheets hovering in front of the walls is more reminiscent of El Lissitzky's shifting walls. The effect, however, is entirely different. The aim of the displays of art in the *Documenta* exhibitions from 1955 was to produce a sensually stimulating, visually immersive experience. As the consumption of experience became as much a commonplace after the Second World War as the consumption of objects,²⁹ art displays like those at the *Documenta* became increasingly spaces of sensations. By the late 1960s the idea of art as part of a total environment had been taken up by artists themselves, and modern art gallery interiors were kept as bland as possible so as to accommodate their room-filling installations. Since then, it seems, curators have refrained from experimenting with the interior of gallery rooms to construct experience, either handing the job over to artists themselves or to commercial interior designers.

The attempt to re-weave the texture of experience and the way gallery spaces are laid out in order to calibrate the collective eye is the overarching theme of this book. But there is, as I hinted at earlier, a passionate aspect too. The great British theatre director Peter Brook has argued that, traditionally, art existed to extend boundaries by breaking taboos – 'But not today', he continues:

The 'shock-effect' cannot shock us any more. It is so close to daily life that it has become quite ordinary. Today, our urgent need is elsewhere. It is to catch glimpses of what our lives have lost. The theatre can give us a fleeting taste of our qualities long forgotten.³⁰

What he has in mind is 'the force that can counterbalance the fragmentation of our world . . . , the discovery of relationships where such relationships have become submerged or lost'.³¹ Personally, I think that it is the museum – even more than the theatre – that most strongly holds out this promise.³² In the conclusion I will argue that museums are the last public space left in which dialogue and interaction between visitors is encouraged. We do not sit quietly in the dark, as we do in theatres and cinemas, or on our own, or as we do in front of a computer terminal, but go with friends and family; we may even find ourselves discussing with strangers the merits of a certain work of art, its themes and meanings. To the many reasons for visiting the museum mentioned at the beginning should be added the pleasure we take in each other's company. A look at the history of displays not only reminds us of the enduring fascination exerted by art galleries but also gives us an insight into the various forms that people have envisaged human interaction in the past.



The National Gallery in London in the Early Nineteenth Century

In a satire of 1868 a certain Mary Ann Hoggins is said to have written to her friend Amelia Hodge about a visit to the National Gallery in London. After looking around for a while, she apparently had turned to an elderly gentleman who was studying the works carefully and asked what he thought a particular portrait would cost, there being no prices on the pictures. 'What do you think that old party said', she reported, amazed:

But that them picters had cost thousands to the nation, which the government had bought them cheap at that. I looked at him scornful as haven't been away from the country to be took in like that, an says, 'You ought to know better, at your time o' life, to give yourself to such a falsity.' 'An,' I says, 'I may be countrybred, but I've seen a-many better down the City-road as might be had frame and all,' I says, 'for eleven or twelve shillin's'.¹

To mistake a public gallery for a market store would not have been as funny and outrageous in the eighteenth century as in the mid-nineteenth. In the eighteenth century all public art exhibitions functioned, more or less openly, as marketplaces for artists' wares.² When the National Gallery was founded, however, a different notion prevailed. Its value was seen to lie precisely in the fact that it provided a realm for a different kind of consumption, a non-material, spiritual one. In an essay on the National Gallery of 1848, the popular writer and preacher Charles Kingsley, addressing himself to working people, laid out this vision for the museum:

Therefore I said that picture-galleries should be the townsman's paradise of refreshment. . . . There, in the space of a single room, the townsman may take his country walk – a walk beneath mountain peaks, blushing sunsets, with broad woodlands spreading out below it; a walk through green meadows, under cool mellow shades, and overhanging rocks, by rushing brooks, where he watches and watches till he seems to *hear* the foam whisper, and to *see* the fishes leap; and his hard-worn heart wanders out free, beyond the grim city-world of stone and iron, smoky chimneys, and roaring wheels, into the world of beautiful things. . . .³



11 Thomas H. Shepherd, *Trafalgar Square*, circa 1843, engraving, 22.7 × 15.3 cm.

Never mind that landscape art was the genre least represented in the National Gallery's collection of old master paintings – by the mid-nineteenth century Kingsley's image of the museum as an idyllic retreat had become a commonplace. The conception of museums as places of aesthetic contemplation, set apart from the commercial world, lay behind the foundation of the many national museums that sprang up all over Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴

The National Gallery (pl. 11) was one of the last European state museums to open. Kingsley's view of the museum notwithstanding, national galleries tied into social life on several levels. On the one hand, they had to compete with alternative attractions on the streets of the big cities, for example, the way in which shops and shopping underwent dramatic changes in the early nineteenth century. On the other, this chapter emphasises the new understanding of subjectivity that was being formulated in the early nineteenth century through scientific research on the psychology of perception and in philosophical speculation on human nature. The first director of the National Gallery, Charles Eastlake, drew on both, psychology and philosophy, to justify a new mode of display in the gallery.⁵ The claim that a national art gallery should serve the nation was, of course, also necessarily connected with a larger political debate. One obvious view might be that the

function of a national gallery was to display exclusively the artistic products of its own nation. Yet this was never the practice at the National Gallery in London – or, indeed, at any of the other national galleries that were founded at that time across Europe.⁶ The dominant idea was less specific and more problematic as we will see: that a national art gallery would contribute, in some way, to the formation of a national sense of citizenship. For Charles Kingsley, this meant that the National Gallery would be a proud emblem of English liberalism: 'In . . . the National Gallery alone the Englishman may say, "Whatever my coat or my purse, I am an Englishman, and therefore I have a right here. I can glory in these noble halls"'.⁷ Yet it was far from obvious in the early nineteenth century who could lay claim to this right and who could not. The foundation of the National Gallery coincided roughly with the agitation for the Reform Bill in 1832 that led to a first limited extension of the franchise. The way that this, and the rise of Chartism in the 1840s, influenced the understanding of spectatorship at the National Gallery will be the subject of the last section of this chapter. The distinctiveness of the developments in nineteenth-century art galleries, however, will become most obvious if we first turn briefly to the kind of viewing experiences that were available to the public before their foundation.

The Manifold in Unity: Eighteenth-century Displays

There were more or less two types of gallery experience available to people interested in art in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century. If they had the right connections and a respectable outfit, they might wangle a visit to a private collection (artists often used their patronage network to this effect). If they had a shilling to spare they could attend one of the annual exhibitions that the various art societies organised (a form of spectatorship that appealed to a growing number of the middle class as the century progressed). Each provided a somewhat different experience. In private collections a decorative display prevailed. This consisted of a symmetrical arrangement in which one major picture was placed at the centre of a composition, flanked by one, two or more paintings on either side. Such can be seen in an engraving from 1808 of the Marquis of Stafford's *New Gallery at Cleveland House* (later Bridgewater House) in London (pl. 12).⁸ The effect of a display of this kind was to present a unified ensemble in which the tasteful decoration of the room was subordinate to the pictures' attractive appearance on the wall. The paintings were divided by schools and each school was presented separately. The New Gallery at Cleveland House formed the central room in the Marquis's display and contained the most venerated of Italian old masters. On the left can be seen a large painting by Annibale Carracci above three Raphaels and opposite Guercino's *David and Abigail*.

Although the separate presentation of works of art produced in different countries was still a novelty in England in the early nineteenth century, the display of past art according to chronology (the collection permitting) and school had become the norm in leading European art collections by the end of the eighteenth century. At the time that Cleveland



12 John C. Smith, *View of the New Gallery at Cleveland House*, engraving. From John Britton, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures belonging to the most honourable The Marquis of Stafford in the Gallery of Cleveland House* (London: Longman, 1808), frontispiece.

House opened, the Louvre in Paris was slowly being reorganised according to this principle.⁹ The most systematic and influential early attempt in a public museum to present a chronological arrangement of the German and Flemish schools separately from the Italian was the Habsburg picture gallery in Vienna, which opened to the public in 1781.¹⁰ Here, as in Cleveland House and other aristocratic collections of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the walls of the rooms were a relatively plain support for the artful arrangement of the pictures. A display of this kind was in contrast to previous installations of pictures in princely palaces. Before the Viennese collection was moved to the castle of Belvedere just outside the city, a large portion of it had been part of the sumptuous decoration of the royal palace at the Stallburg in the centre of Vienna. There, in an arrangement reminiscent of the cabinets of curiosities of the previous century, the pictures formed only one part of a comprehensive decorative scheme whose overall function was to illustrate the ruler's glory (pl. 13).¹¹ Set in curved gilt wainscoting on black panelling, the pictures were cut to size to blend with the overall design of the walls. The intention was to impress visitors not with individual items but with the overall splendour and richness of the display. As Debora Meijers has argued, this principle of organ-



13 Ferdinand Storffer, *Black Cabinet*, watercolour. From Ferdinand Storffer, *Neu eingerichtetes Inventarium der Kays. Bilder Gallerie in der Stallburg*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1730), p. 11.

isation was replaced in the Belvedere by a new frame of reference directed towards art itself.¹²

The division of the schools in the new installation encouraged the viewer to compare and contrast their different treatment of subjects and styles. Behind this comparative approach lay the efforts of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century French academic art theory to establish a supposedly objective set of values and principles for judging art. Roger de Piles, the leading art theorist at that time, had tried to identify these principles by separating the parts of a painting into its more or less abstract constituents, such as form, colour, composition and expression.¹³ Yet this comparative exegesis did not undermine the view that the Italian school from Raphael to the seventeenth century represented the pinnacle of artistic achievement. The arrangements in Vienna, as well as at Cleveland House and elsewhere, were still essentially based on an eighteenth-century hierarchy of values with Italian art as its apex. Cinquecento and Seicento art occupied the

most important room in the exhibition. Displays such as that in Cleveland House corresponded precisely to what the first president of the Royal Academy in London, Joshua Reynolds, outlined in his *Discourses on Art*. The artist had delivered his *Discourses* as lectures to the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790, and they remained influential well into the nineteenth century. According to the neo-classical canon that Reynolds articulated in adaptation of French academic theory, Dutch art was merely the exact representation of nature, while Italian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was capable of representing the ideal, the abstracted general form that essentially underlay particular appearances.¹⁴

At the Royal Academy itself, however, a much less stringent arrangement and more crowded display prevailed.¹⁵ The temporary exhibitions of the European academies of art in the eighteenth century showed, in contrast to private collections, works from the same country and historical epoch. Although here, too, a roughly symmetrical order was followed, with big paintings in the middle, usually flanked by two full-length portraits, the surrounding space was entirely filled in with smaller pictures, mainly landscapes and genre scenes as illustrated by an engraving of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1787 (pl. 2). Such cluttered displays were, of course, partly due to lack of space, but they were also deliberate. When in 1780 the Royal Academy moved to new exhibition rooms in London in Somerset House, purpose-built by one of the academy's members, William Chambers, the crowded display was repeated. No doubt a more spacious arrangement could have been designed had a desire for such existed.

A wall-filling display can still be seen in Frederick Mackenzie's watercolour of *The National Gallery at Mrs J. J. Angerstein's House, Pall Mall, prior to May 1834* (pl. 14) from around 1830. After the purchase of John Julius Angerstein's collection for the nation in 1824, the pictures remained temporarily at their former owner's house in Pall Mall, where they stayed until the new museum building was ready in Trafalgar Square in 1838. The display in the two galleries at Pall Mall shown in Mackenzie's depiction is a mixture between the cluttered hang – a result of new donations by benefactors and occasional purchases – and the picturesque display typical of permanent galleries. Angerstein had the two rooms decorated in a neo-Baroque style that extended to the reframing of the paintings. This was common practice among private collectors – although the pictures formed the main point of reference in such displays, the decoration gave the gallery a unified appearance.

Neither of these eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century displays shows the paintings isolated from each other; in none are the pictures presented as entities to be displayed as individual objects to the visitors. The hanging schemes did not accentuate the unique character of individual artists and schools. Rather, they assumed that art should be organised in relation to a common, independent standard. In each collection the variety of works went effectively beyond what was manifestly the unifying principle: the classical ideal of art. There was no single prescribed viewing position for the paintings, and visitors were invited to compare the parts of one with another as they wandered amongst them. For the eighteenth century, contemporary Western European societies represented an ideal towards which all other societies were supposed to progress. Such diversity as there was among



14 Frederick Mackenzie, *The National Gallery at Mrs J. J. Angerstein's House, Pall Mall, prior to May 1834*, exhibited 1834, oil on canvas, 47 × 63 cm.

societies and individuals was understood only as the effect of the absence of certain characteristics to be found more fully developed elsewhere.¹⁶ The displays discussed so far embodied a corresponding view of art. They did not see distinct types of art as responses to the unique characteristics of the societies that had produced them, nor did they pay attention to the individual perceptual responses of the viewer. It is this view that is given expression in the engraving of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1787 (pl. 2).¹⁷ The public and the pictures on the walls are manifold, but they echo each other compositionally and are artfully brought together in an overarching unity. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, however, a major new form of artistic display made its appearance, one that valued individuality and made the subjective viewing position of the observer of crucial importance.

Pay and Display: The Bazaar and the Exhibition of Works of Art

In 1793 Robert Barker erected London's first panorama in Leicester Square. Viewers flocked to a circular building, where they could stand on an evenly lit platform around which unfolded a painted view of London from the south bank of the Thames. Many more panoramas showing different and more exotic sceneries soon sprang into existence. The attitude of the artistic community towards these new types of display was mixed. Reynolds gave his approval, but the landscape artist John Constable disparaged their aesthetic value.¹⁸ The public, however, was enthusiastic, and flocked in much greater numbers to these displays than to those of the Royal Academy. By attempting to give the viewers the impression that they were witnessing a real scene, rather than a painted one, panoramas placed a new emphasis on the observing subject. They were soon overtaken by even more spectacular inventions, such as dioramas and cosmoramas, which, to ever-greater degrees, exploited illusionary effects.¹⁹ All these inventions were rapturously received in the press of the day. The shows were judged by the success of the illusion they achieved. Common-place in contemporary descriptions were claims that the illusion was so perfect that, in a moment of confusion, the reviewer mistook the experience for reality.²⁰ Conversely, when the performances failed to live up to expectations they were lambasted in the press. In 1824 a reviewer in the *Literary Gazette* deplored a show of Daguerre's *City and Harbour of Brest* at the Regent's Park Diorama because it failed to offer a sufficiently 'irresistible deception to the eye'.²¹ More than any other invention, the diorama's aim was perfect sensory deception. The intended effect was a temporally unfolding optical illusion of changing light in the depicted scene. This was produced by illuminating a transparent image in different ways and from different angles. A system of four shutters controlled the illumination, thus mimicking the effect of the eyelids and the narrowing and widening iris when the light changes drastically. Although the dioramas were initially established on purpose-built premises, their major site came to be the bazaars, the early nineteenth-century predecessors of the department store.

Bazaars – a new designation that was presumably meant to evoke the exotic allure of bustling Arabic marketplaces – had several novel features. Before 1815, proprietors and shopkeepers had mostly lived on their premises and were specialists in, if not themselves the producers of, the goods they sold. With the advent of bazaars, however, a new area of retail distribution emerged. From now on retailers of different trades were able to rent stalls in the bazaars from a proprietor who owned the usually multi-storey building.²² Bazaars proliferated in Britain from the late 1820s onwards. Here visitors were under no obligation to buy; prices were often marked; and piece-goods of different lines of merchandise were sold.²³ Many bazaars also had art on offer, as would department stores after 1850, but most of all, it was the new kinds of artistic exhibition such as the dioramas and cosmoramas that were used to attract customers to the premises.

When, for example, the Royal Bazaar opened in 1828 at 73 Oxford Street it offered a diorama as well as other exhibitions in an attempt to become, in the words of one reviewer, 'the premier fashionable lounge in the metropolis'.²⁴ Five years later when the Bloomsbury tailor Benjamin Read was looking for trendy public places in front of which he could show fashions for the coming season, he chose the bazaar on Oxford Street (pl. 15). Visible on



15 Queen's Bazaar, Oxford Street (formerly Royal Bazaar), 1833, coloured aquatint, 38.5 × 53.5 cm.

the right of the aquatint he issued in 1833 is a display of the art for sale in such establishments. Just below this hangs a notice for the diorama on the premises, which showed a plagiarised version of John Martin's great public success of 1820, *Belshazzar's Feast*, advertised here as being painted with dioramic effect.²⁵ Such exhibitions celebrated the illusory quality of sensual experience, while, alongside them, visitors were enticed by glittering luxury articles, commodities whose value lay solely in the gratification of sensual desires. In the words of the Oriental Bazaar's advertisement:

The Riches here of East and West
Your fancies will amuse,
Besides to give a greater zest,
We've cosmoramic views.²⁶

The bazaars are a perfect example of what Walter Benjamin called the realm of phantasmagoria increasingly inhabited by the urban dweller of the nineteenth century: environments in which the use-value of commodities had disappeared, to become spaces 'which humans enter in order to be diverted'.²⁷ Benjamin also suggested that:

There is a relationship between the department store and the museum in which the bazaar is a transitional moment. The massing of artworks in the museum moves them closer to the character of commodities, which, where they are offered en masse to the passer-by, arouse the idea that a share in them must be his due.²⁸

What the museum shared with the department stores and other urban sites, in Benjamin's view, was that they offered the passer-by an abundance of visual stimuli, titillating his desire for possession while remaining forever elusive in their promise of fulfilment. The development of bazaars after the Napoleonic Wars anticipated many of the later changes in consumption that are usually associated with the emergence of the department store in France, most of all the emphasis on an overwhelming multitude of visual stimuli. But although Benjamin himself refers to the nineteenth-century museum as a continuation of the bazaar and department store, with works of art on offer like commodities, the consumer mode of spectatorship was in fact much slower to arrive in galleries. As we shall see in Chapter Four, as a ruling concept in the museum, it took hold only in the twentieth century. Although people were able to buy art in various exhibitions, for example at the World Fairs, art academy shows and some of the regional museums, in the nineteenth century, those responsible for the national art galleries were trying to establish a different, less possessive and more moral mode of spectatorship. The concern for the effect of visual stimuli on the subject that was characteristic of the marketplace, however, would also become a crucial concern in the gallery in the nineteenth century. In contrast to the emphasis on unity in eighteenth-century picture displays, the debates that took place regarding the hanging of pictures at the National Gallery in London focused on the subjective viewing experience of spectators.

The Subjectivity of Vision

When the new National Gallery opened the doors to the public at its permanent home in Trafalgar Square in 1838, the walls appeared just as crowded as they had been in Angerstein's house on Pall Mall.²⁹ Even before it moved into its new home, the collection had, through acquisitions and donations, outgrown its new space of two small and three large rooms in the west wing of the building – the east wing was taken up by the Royal Academy. Although the dense multi-tiered hanging scheme still followed the conventional eighteenth-century aesthetic, this was no longer universally believed to be the best display strategy. In 1836, even before the opening, William Wilkins, the architect of the Trafalgar Square building, criticised the arrangement: 'I always supposed they would not hang them exactly as they are at present hung. . . . pictures require to be brought near the eye.'³⁰ In 1847 John Ruskin, who had recently achieved just fame with the first two volumes of his *Modern Painters*, demanded a new arrangement for the gallery. He called for abandonment of the crowded hang in favour of displaying all pictures at eye level. 'Every gallery should be long enough', he stated, 'to admit of its whole collection being hung in one line, side by side, and wide enough to allow of the spectators retiring to the distance at which the largest picture was intended to be seen.'³¹ Similarly dissatisfied with the display of the collection was the keeper, Charles Eastlake, who assumed his post in 1843. In a pamphlet of 1845,

addressed to the prime minister and National Gallery trustee Sir Robert Peel, Eastlake pressed for a major reorganisation of the collection in order to emphasise the singularity of the pictures while still taking into account the effects of the display on the perception of individual visitors:

I need hardly observe that it is not desirable to cover every blank space, at any height, merely for the sake of clothing the walls, and without reference to the size and quality of the picture. Every specimen of art in a national collection should, perhaps, be assumed to be fit to challenge inspection, and to be worthy of being well displayed.³²

At the same time as the dioramas and cosmoramas were being constructed as environments exploiting the illusory quality of sensual experience for the pleasure of their public, physiologists were investigating the scientific basis of visual illusion, and Eastlake's proposal shows traces of this discussion. Although this research emphasised the subjective conditions of visual perception,³³ the aim was a general one: to use that investigation to understand the inescapable biological processes that structure or enable vision. Such a concern was congenial to Eastlake. The display of the gallery too, he argued, had to take into account the subjective aspects of vision, while still appealing to the common nature of all its visitors.

It was one work more than any other that was responsible for laying the foundations of the investigation into the subjectivity of vision: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Theory of Colours*, first published in 1810. Its English translation appeared in 1840 and the translator was none other than Eastlake.³⁴ Unlike Newton, who explained colours as the result of rays of refracted light, Goethe believed that they were the result of light interacting with darkness and that, as such, each colour represented a certain degree of darkness. It was the first part of the *Theory of Colours* that proved most influential on subsequent research.³⁵ Here Goethe wrote on 'Physiological Colours' and also included a last section on 'Pathological Colours' in which he, as Eastlake put it, 'considered colours, as far as they may be said to belong to the eye itself, and to depend on an action and re-action of the organ'.³⁶ In a series of experiments Goethe demonstrated that certain colour interactions produced a subjective effect on the retina – for example, the sensation of the opposite colour when one has been exposed for a long time to its complementary, and the perception of enhanced brilliance when complementaries are experienced one next to the other.³⁷ Eastlake was clear about the relevance of Goethe's work to his and his contemporaries' aesthetic interests. In the preface to the translation he states that, although Goethe is mistaken in his strident opposition to Newton's theory, 'it must be admitted that the statements of Goethe contain more useful principles in all that relates to harmony of colour than any that have been derived from the established doctrine'.³⁸ 'Useful', that is, to those interested in the arts, and Eastlake's notes were principally intended to show that the *Theory of Colours* was consistent with the knowledge and practice of the ancients and the masters of the Italian Renaissance.

Eastlake, however, was also alert to the novelty of Goethe's approach and to the scientific research this had engendered. In his notes, he updated Goethe's *Theory of Colours* with references to the more recent physiological work of the Czech Jan Purkinje,³⁹ the German Johannes Müller,⁴⁰ the Englishman Charles Wheatstone⁴¹ and the Scottish scien-

tist David Brewster,⁴² each of whom played an important part in reinforcing the 'subjective turn' in the study of perception. Inspired by Goethe, Purkinje had published two studies in 1819 and 1825 that systematically demonstrated that the irritability of the retina was not the product of external stimuli alone but could stem from internal sensations in the human body as well.⁴³ Purkinje's research, like Goethe's, was based on self-experimentation. He discussed a wide range of phenomena: the figures visible on the retina following strong light and shadow alternations; apparent colour changes depending on just where light reaches the eye; the blind spot; the effects of narcotics on vision; and the generation of what he called 'eye music' that followed linear and geometric configurations – dynamic effects that Op artists were to exploit in the twentieth century.⁴⁴ These investigations showed that the eye was capable of generating optical experiences qualitatively at variance with their external causes, and Purkinje illustrated this in a number of striking abstract images.

This kind of research would have been unthinkable without a new emphasis on the subjective nature of perception in philosophical thinking around 1800. At the end of the eighteenth century Immanuel Kant in Germany and, a little later, Dugald Stewart in Britain, had both assailed the assumption that one's perception of things is caused by and truly represents external objects as they are in reality.⁴⁵ Johannes Müller, in his hugely influential textbook on human physiology, published in 1838, sought to substantiate this philosophical position through empirical research, building on the work of Purkinje and others.⁴⁶ His own research showed that each of the senses had its own particular properties and was physiologically distinct from the others. He argued that the same internal and external causes excite different sensations in the different senses. For example, the circulation of blood produced a sensation of light in the sense of vision while at the same time producing a humming noise in the ear; the external stimulus of electricity, on the other hand, produced light in the sense of vision, sound in the sense of hearing, and the odour of phosphorus in the mouth.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the same sensation could have different external and internal stimuli. The perception of light, for example, could be excited by mechanical, electrical, chemical or other causes.⁴⁸ Müller concluded that:

the preceding considerations show us the impossibility that our senses can ever reveal to us the true nature and essence of the material world. In our intercourse with external nature it is always our own sensations that we become acquainted with, and from them we form conceptions of the properties of external objects, which may be relatively correct; but we can never submit the nature of the objects themselves to that immediate perception to which the states of the different parts of our own body are subjected in the sensorium.⁴⁹

While eighteenth-century epistemologies had assumed various universal principles that guaranteed that the world is such that human perception is capable of knowing it,⁵⁰ early nineteenth-century philosophy and physiology questioned this correlation and emphatically relocated perception in the human body.

Purkinje's research was first brought to the attention of the British public by Charles Wheatstone, who, in 1830, published a summary translation of Purkinje's first publica-

tion.⁵¹ Wheatstone's own research on binocular vision further strengthened the notion of perception being located in the human body. He showed that binocular disparity (the fact that each eye sees an image from a slightly different angle) does not matter at a distance when the optical axis of both eyes is almost parallel. At close range, however, when the viewpoints are considerably at variance, he showed that it was the brain that synthesised the two images as one.⁵² The fact that the two images – perceived as synthesised – are in fact separate entities was propagated to a wider audience through Wheatstone's invention of the hugely popular stereoscope.⁵³ When the Scottish philosopher and psychologist Alexander Bain linked up the physiological research of the first half of the nineteenth century with British associationist philosophy, he concluded that the mind did indeed play an active role in our conception of the external world: 'The sense of the external is the consciousness of particular energies and activities of our own.'⁵⁴ That Eastlake was aware of the conclusions to be drawn from the scientific research sparked by Goethe's text is clear from a note in which he states that the 'instances adduced by Müller and others are . . . intended to prove the inherent capacity of the organ of vision to produce light and colours.'⁵⁵

In light of all of this, it is not surprising that Eastlake, in his pamphlet of 1845 on the National Gallery, should have emphasised the importance of reorganising the collection with regard to its effect on the visual field of individual visitors, who were assumed to perceive one picture at a time. Eastlake's main purpose was to agitate for a larger building for the collection so that the pictures could be brought into a reasonable eye line and given sufficient surrounding space. In a less crowded hanging scheme, however, the walls and their colour would assume particular importance since they would make, as Eastlake observed, 'a considerable part of the impression on the eye'.⁵⁶ A passage in the pamphlet shows that Eastlake sought guidance in this matter in the new theories of complementary colour harmony that took account of the subjective colour response:

With respect to the colour of the walls on which pictures are to be hung, it may be observed that a picture will be seen to advantage on a ground brighter than its darks and darker than its lights, and of so subdued a tint as may contrast well with its brighter colours. The choice of that tint should, I conceive, be regulated by the condition of its harmonizing with the colour gold, with which it is more immediately in contact.⁵⁷

But what colour would this be?

Decoration and Display in the National Gallery

When the National Gallery opened in 1838 the walls were painted in olive green.⁵⁸ A variant of grey-green seems to have been the colour of the background at the Royal Academy exhibitions at Somerset House – although this could hardly have been visible in a hanging scheme that covered the wall from floor to ceiling. The walls of the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna were still painted in a dark greenish-grey in 1850,⁵⁹ and during the refurbishment of the Louvre after the Revolution, when a sparser hanging scheme was attempted, it was

decided to paint the walls of the Grande Galerie in olive green.⁶⁰ After its substantial refurbishment between 1805 and 1810, however, red drapery was used to cover its walls. Helmine von Chezy, a visitor to the Louvre at that time, later recalled that this colour was perceived to be too dominant and was generally not liked. According to von Chezy, a simple grey or grey-green would have been more appropriate.⁶¹ Grey and grey-green were considered neutral colours in the early nineteenth century. A widely read nineteenth-century writer on colour harmony and its application to interior decoration, for example, stated that 'green is the most neutral of all the decided colours'.⁶²

Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century green was progressively abandoned in favour of a stronger statement. Red walls had already been standard in private collections in Italy, Germany and Britain and adopted in those newly opened, privately owned London galleries that were purpose-built for the display of pictures. Both the British Institution and the New Gallery, part of the Marquis of Stafford's Cleveland House, showed their pictures on walls covered in dull red and this was also the colour chosen for the Dulwich College Picture Gallery in 1817, designed by the architect Sir John Soane.⁶³ Similarly, both the new public museums in Berlin and Munich, which opened in 1830 and 1836 respectively, had rich red paper as the background to the pictures.⁶⁴ The introduction of red did not, however, contradict the valuation of neutrality in the background for pictures. Deep crimson, according to David Hay, the popular writer on colour harmony, 'forms the best neutral tint for giving effect to gilding' as it was employed in the picture frames.⁶⁵

The trigger for this change in colour preference appears to have been the new interest in complementary colours. In the second half of the eighteenth century Ignaz Schiffermüller in Vienna and Moses Harris in London sought to establish rules for harmonic colour arrangements in painting. They posited the complementary nature of the three primary colours, red, yellow and blue, and three secondaries, green, violet and orange. As early as 1743 in his discussion of after-images, George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, had shown that the eye, after looking for a time at one colour, would conjure the complementary colour. Towards the end of the eighteenth century more and more studies appeared that treated what were then called 'accidental colours'.⁶⁶ This research supported the theory of the existence of three primary colours and their complementary secondaries.⁶⁷ But it was left to Goethe to combine the theory of the harmony of complementaries in art theory with research into the nature of colour response and thus bring it to the attention of those interested in the subjective conditions of visual perception.

Goethe was, of course, writing from a fiercely anti-Newtonian point of view; Newton's seven-colour theory was dominant in the science of optics at that time, at least outside Germany. Nevertheless, although confusion about the difference between the mixture of light of different wavelengths and the mixture of coloured pigments was still hampering research into the nature of colour and colour vision, towards the end of the eighteenth century some scientists had begun to support the three-colour theory. In 1802 Thomas Young, professor of natural philosophy at the Royal Institution in London, proposed the existence of three types of nerves in the retina sensitive to red, yellow and blue light respectively (a triad he later modified to red, green and violet), while his Scottish colleague David Brewster, a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, concluded from experiments

with the production of white light by absorption of colours that red, yellow and blue were the primary constituents of white light. Both these accounts supported the theory of complementaries.⁶⁸

How much of this had passed into fashionable culture can be gauged from a review of 1807 in the journal *Le Beau Monde*:

The object of all exhibitions of works of art is to make known the particular species of merit, or talent which characterises each performance; and three points of deliberation are seriously to be weighed as conducive to this object: 1st the colour of the apartment, 2nd the nature of the light; and 3rd, the elevation of the performances. As colours are almost entirely a matter of contrast, it is obvious that if pictures be hung on a ground of any colour whatsoever, that ground will enhance, in such pictures, the colours that differ from it, and will reduce the effect of those that are of its own kind. The painting-room of Rubens is known to have been hung with crimson, and, though somewhat subdued by a dark pattern of flocks, it certainly may be considered as one cause of the excessive redness to be found in all his pictures. The picture-gallery at Powis castle was, lately, a bright green, coloured, no doubt, by the upholsterer, as a matter of furniture. The gallery at Cleveland-house, where so many fine pictures are displayed, is a fleshy kind of brown, judiciously chosen for a collection of Old Masters, to correct the brownness which all pictures in oil acquire by time.⁶⁹

The writer is clearly confused about the contrast effect (simultaneous contrast) when colours (and not just those from which they differ most) are placed next to each other. Where colours meet, the contrast between them will appear more intense. The study of coloured shadows had shown that a strong colour irradiates its surroundings with its complementary, and so the author's suggestion about the perceived reddish cast of Rubens's paintings being a result of the red tint of his studio's walls is somewhat puzzling. His remarks about the inadequacies of green walls, however, which until then had been standard for public exhibitions of pictures, show that the introduction of dark red was made deliberately in order to enhance the colour range of yellow, green and blue in old master paintings that were subdued by 'the brownness which all pictures in oil acquire by time', brownness here being clearly understood to be a variant of dark red. A similar understanding of colour contrasts also informed Eastlake's remarks on the colour of walls in galleries. But his argument was more informed by the theory of the tonal opposition of colour, which had been advocated by Goethe and, in Britain, by George Field. When Eastlake wrote that 'a picture will be seen to advantage on a ground brighter than its darks and darker than its lights, and of so subdued a tint as may contrast well with its brighter colours', he might well have had the colour red in mind. In Goethe's theory, according to which the colours result from the interaction of light and dark, yellow was closest to light and blue to dark, while red was right in the middle of the scale. Red was thus seen as the medium between the lightest colours and the darkest. Goethe argued that when the three primary colours were combined, their unity contained the whole chromatic scale.⁷⁰ Thus the addition of red would convey a harmonious impression to the eye of the beholder when matched with the yellow-gold of the frames and the pictures' darker colours.

Eastlake did not have a chance to refurbish the National Gallery according to his own ideas during his time as keeper from 1843 to 1847, and so it retained its green walls well after other institutions had changed to the deep red that the theory of complementary colours endorsed. But as president of the Royal Academy (a post to which he was appointed in 1850) he automatically became a trustee of the National Gallery. Interviewed by a Select Committee on the Arts in 1848, he stated that he strongly objected to 'the mode of colouring the walls as is adopted in the National Gallery',⁷¹ and in 1854 he complained to the keeper, Thomas Uwins, that he wished to resign as a trustee because he was mostly isolated by the other trustees in the task of overseeing the National Gallery.⁷² Thus, when at a meeting of the trustees in July 1853 it was resolved that the galleries should be redecorated, it is very likely that Eastlake was an active force behind this. It was probably his view that was being expressed when the trustees resolved that the National Gallery was now very 'unsightly' and ordered that the building should be redecorated during the vacation and the walls covered with a maroon flock paper, 'the colour of the walls having become most unfavourable to the pictures'.⁷³

Eastlake, however, was by no means an indiscriminate advocate of the colour red on the walls of picture galleries. When he returned to the National Gallery to be its first director from 1855 to 1865, his powers were much increased.⁷⁴ After many years of campaigning, a first, albeit insufficient step was taken to enlarge the space available for the display of the National Gallery's collection in August 1860. Parliament voted for a plan by the architect James Pennethorne to floor over the central entrance hall of the building and create a new picture gallery above a sculpture room for the Royal Academy, alterations that also resulted in modification of the old sequence of rooms.⁷⁵ This refurbishment gave Eastlake his chance to propose a redecoration of the galleries in line with his views. On 21 January 1861 a plan was approved at a trustees' meeting at which only the director, the secretary and William Russell were present. This plan, which was clearly adopted on Eastlake's initiative, shows that his concept of colour contrasts was more complex than the uniform red that by then had become the norm in British art galleries. In order to take the specific optical qualities of individual schools of art into account, some rooms were to have green walls, others crimson or maroon paper, while the first small room was intended to be yellow.⁷⁶

Eastlake and his keeper, Ralph Wornum, obviously felt that any background 'brighter than [the painting's] darks and darker than its lights, and so subdued a tint as may contrast well with its brighter colours' ought to be different for the different schools.⁷⁷ The green and red tints chosen for the various rooms were conventionally perceived as middle tones. The surprising colour introduced in the scheme of 1861, however, was the yellow in the first room. Although it was common in private homes, it was an unusual colour for a purpose-built public gallery in the nineteenth century. When the National Gallery opened, this room contained mainly early German and some early Italian works of art.⁷⁸ In his translation of Goethe's *Theory*, Eastlake had emphasised the way in which early German and Netherlandish painters had worked on white backgrounds and had endeavoured to keep the brightness by applying translucent colours and allowing much of it to show through. This was, he thought, based on the practice of German artists, who often painted on glass and in the process had discovered the brightness of the light as it permeated the



16 New Room at the National Gallery, wood engraving. From *The Illustrated London News*, 15 June 1861, p. 547.

image – something that they were keen to retain when they turned to oil painting.⁷⁹ Did Eastlake and Wornum suggest yellow for the walls of the room in which such pictures were to be displayed as being a brighter middling tone than red or green?

Sadly, this scheme was never carried out. Someone, somewhere must have put a stop to it.⁸⁰ When the National Gallery reopened on 11 May 1861, the small room was not yellow but crimson, and only one room, the North Room, containing early Italian pictures, was painted green.⁸¹ Even this still relatively conventional colour was sharply criticised by a reviewer in the *Art-Journal*. The room was covered, the reviewer wrote, 'with a pale green paper, cold and repugnant to the last degree'. By contrast, a dull maroon colour, such as had been chosen for the new room, was, in the writer's opinion, 'the best general tint to oppose to pictures'.⁸² Eastlake was clearly afraid of public criticism of the refurbished galleries and for this reason may have withdrawn his original colour scheme when meeting internal resistance. In 1860 he wrote to Wornum that 'the new Gallery (for such it will almost appear) should not be open to great objecting on account of the mere arrangement. No bad pictures should be prominent & the best should be well displayed'.⁸³ Consequently, the new room (pl. 16) came to be a 'Tribune' – a room containing the greatest masterpieces

of the collection – something that Eastlake had earlier criticised the Louvre for retaining, instead of ordering artworks according to a systematic art historical classification, as had been attempted in Berlin.⁸⁴ Among other much-praised pictures, the room contained Titian's *Noli me Tangere*, his *Bacchus and Ariadne* and his *Venus and Adonis*.

For the remainder of the nineteenth century there would be no more experimenting with wall colours. When the National Gallery was reorganised in 1866 on the occasion of the Royal Academy's move to Burlington House, and in 1876 when E. M. Barry's sumptuous extension opened, the walls retained their traditional deep rich red. As Giuseppe Gabrielli's *The National Gallery, 1886: Interior of Room 32* shows (pl. 3), even the hanging still remained crowded, although an attempt was made to avoid hanging the pictures – here by sixteenth-century Italian artists – too high by introducing screens. Only in 1917 was a single-row display achieved, at least partially, in the National Gallery.⁸⁵

But Eastlake did not just consider the colour of the walls. His determination to exhibit the pictures to best advantage also extended to the lighting of the building, and here too a concern for the best viewing position of both individual paintings and their viewers is apparent. During the eighteenth century it had become commonly accepted that top lighting was the best means of illuminating pictures, whether in artists' studios or in exhibition rooms.⁸⁶ Indeed, the Grande Galerie of the Louvre was heavily criticised before its refurbishment in the years 1805–10 for not being top-lit but rather dependent on side windows whose reflection on the pictures opposite made the latter indiscernible.⁸⁷ The multi-tiered displays of eighteenth-century picture galleries generally required a relatively high and wide wall and a surface area uninterrupted by windows. Top lighting of one kind or another was seen as providing the best, relatively even, distribution of light for such a display – although small pictures hung very low or high would often have been difficult to see. But such illumination, which took no account of the different viewing conditions required by different types of paintings, was considered inappropriate by Eastlake. Although in 1848 he had not yet seen the new museums in Munich and Berlin,⁸⁸ he was well apprised of the current German belief in the advantage of side-lit galleries. In a report of 1840 addressed to the architect C. R. Cockerell, Eastlake and the artist and administrator William Dyce had recommended side lighting for what was to become the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and he made the point again in his pamphlet of 1845.⁸⁹ It was Gustav Friedrich Waagen, director of the Königliches Museum in Berlin, who had persuaded Eastlake that this was the best mode of lighting. He had argued to Eastlake that pictures should be exhibited under the lighting conditions in which they had been executed by the artist in the studio, and that this was normally light emanating from the left.⁹⁰ The new Berlin museum, which opened in 1830, designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, followed this doctrine. All of the collection's pictures were displayed in long and narrow rooms on the second floor around a rotunda containing sculpture. The rooms had windows on the left, and between every pair of pictures a screen projected from the wall carrying pictures on both sides. The reference to artists' studios as a model was, however, ambiguous. In the eighteenth century Rubens's studio arrangement had been cited as evidence for precisely the opposite conclusion: that top lighting was the most appropriate form for picture displays.⁹¹ But Eastlake's reasoning was of a different nature. He argued that various types of painting required variously lit spaces:

rooms of equal height are not advisable for large and small pictures; . . . supposing a skylight to be the fittest on all occasions, elaborate cabinet pictures, in order to be near the eye, and, at the same time, near the light (for both conditions are essential), must be placed in less lofty rooms.⁹²

In the report to Cockerell, Eastlake and Dyce criticised the Berlin model as inappropriate for large paintings.⁹³ In their view, a gallery required a variety of modes of lighting, and they recommended Leo von Klenze's solution for the Pinakothek in Munich. Here large paintings were displayed in lofty rooms fitted with top lights, while small cabinet pictures were hung in the surrounding rooms with windows at the side.⁹⁴ In such side-lit rooms, however, Eastlake and Dyce argued, it would be of particular advantage if the pictures were hung on screens at an angle of 62 degrees to the window, a position from which they could be studied in the intimacy required without the viewer being dazzled.⁹⁵

In Eastlake's and Dyce's opinion the adoption of such a mixed mode of lighting offered a further advantage. The division of pictures into groups of small and large works was also in accord with the division of the paintings into schools:

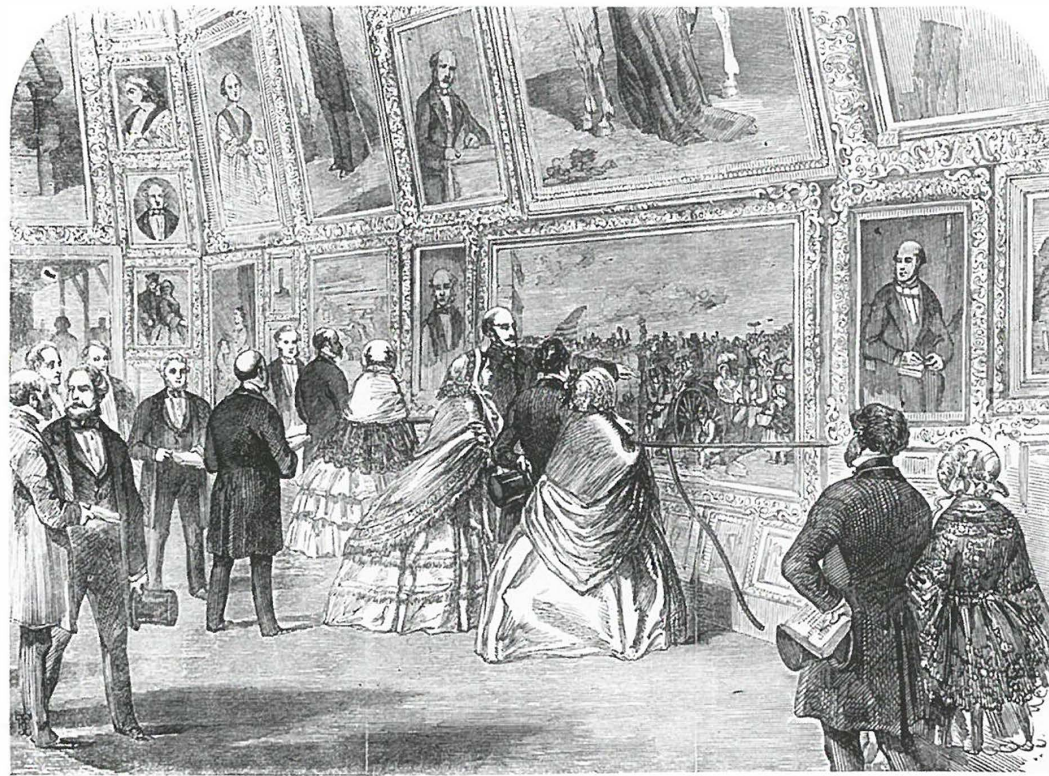
The easel pictures, for instance, of the early Italian schools previous to the latter half of the fifteenth century are generally small size. After that period, to the middle of the sixteenth century, they are, with the exception of those of the school of Ferrara, mostly large. Coming lower down we find the works of the Bolognese, Spanish, Neapolitan, and Flemish schools, with some exceptions, large; of the Dutch school, generally small.⁹⁶

Thus a varied system of lighting in the museum would not only offer optimal viewing conditions for individual visitors but would also emphasise the individual character of the artwork, its period and the geographic region in which it had been produced.

On Individuality

So far I have discussed the way in which early nineteenth-century developments in commercial spaces, in research on sense physiology and in the display of pictures in the gallery all emphasised the subjectivity of perception. What was at stake were the effects produced upon the subject by a particular set of determinants, irrespective of who the individual in question might be. This conception was complemented by another theme of contemporary culture: the radical notion of individuality. The Romantic idea that individuals are both morally and metaphysically distinctive, and that a central function of art is to provide a vehicle for the expression of individuality in this sense, carried significant weight in the arrangement of pictures in nineteenth-century galleries.

In 1858 the *Illustrated London News* published a print of that year's Royal Academy exhibition (pl. 17). Instead of showing the crowded walls and rooms of the exhibition, this print concentrates on the crowded scene in the most popular painting, William Powell Frith's *Derby Day*. This work created such a sensation when it was first shown that it had to be protected with a rail (as had David Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners* in 1822, equally nar-



17 Visit of Her Majesty, Prince Albert and the Queen of Portugal to the Royal Academy, wood engraving. From *The Illustrated London News*, 22 May 1858, p. 501.

rative and contemporary in subject matter). Frith's *Derby Day* shows a cross-section of the London crowd: the low racecourse trickster, the aristocrat, the university man, the farmer's wife, the villain, etc.⁹⁷ According to the *Illustrated London News*, the painting presented 'photographic glimpses of character' as they were found at this central national event, which was habitually attended by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, shown here.⁹⁸ In the Prince of Wales's visit to the Royal Academy, depicted in Ramberg's *Visit of the Prince of Wales to Somerset House in 1787* (pl. 2), the prince had been depicted as submerged in the large crowd around him. In this engraving, done seventy-one years later, each member of the royal party (which included the keeper of the National Gallery and members of the Royal Academy), like the characters in Frith's painting, is quite distinct in appearance.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the theme of individuality had become increasingly significant in more and more areas of British culture. Two of its most celebrated proponents, Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, took much of their inspiration directly and indirectly from early nineteenth-century German thought. Against the emphasis by eighteenth-century theorists on the invariant characteristics common to all human beings, the manifestations

of variety in different individuals notwithstanding, the young Carlyle advocated a quite different ideal. Each man, he wrote, should be 'alive with his whole being': 'Let each become all that he was created capable of being; expand, if possible, to his full growth . . . and show himself at length in his own shape and stature, be these what they may.'⁹⁹ Mill extended this conception to the political domain, demanding freedom for the individual to go his or her own way, a freedom that would allow human beings to cultivate all that was unique to them and to develop their special characteristics.¹⁰⁰ The political claims built on this notion of individual dignity contributed to the agitation for universal suffrage in the nineteenth century. In return, the nation-states could, it was argued, expect their citizens to act with a sense of social and moral responsibility. How this would be achieved was a matter of debate – but the museum was seen to play a particular role in the process.

In his essay 'Of Individuality', Mill refers at length, and approvingly, to the Prussian politician and cultural reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt:

Few persons, out of Germany, even comprehend the meaning of the doctrine which Wilhelm von Humboldt, so eminent both as a savant and as a politician, made the text of a treatise – that 'the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole'; that, therefore, the object 'towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts, and on which especially those who design to influence their fellow men must ever keep their eyes, is the individuality of power and development'; that for this there are two requisites, 'freedom, and variety of situations', and that from the union of these arise 'individual vigour and manifold diversity', which combine themselves to 'originality'.¹⁰¹

Humboldt was a close friend of Goethe and Schiller, and collaborated with Schiller on the journal *Horen* in the 1790s. Later, in his capacity as Prussian minister of culture, he was to be a prime mover in the planning of the Königliches Museum in Berlin.¹⁰² It was in the Weimar circle of Goethe and Schiller that the notion of distinctness and individuality of character was first explicitly articulated in Germany.¹⁰³ In *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe described an ideal of complete and harmonious development in which the physical and spiritual, rational and emotional aspects of life would be fully integrated.¹⁰⁴ Art, according to his friend Friedrich Schiller, had a particular role to play in promoting this integration. In his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller argued that art offered the artist the chance to express 'the absolute, unchanging, unity of his being'.¹⁰⁵ For both Goethe and Schiller, then, the development of character meant not the cultivation of idiosyncrasies but its opposite: the formation of a harmoniously balanced personality along lines of the Greek ideal. Their Romantic successors, however, emphasised the uniqueness and individuality of each character. 'The highest virtue', the young Friedrich Schlegel argued, '[is] to promote one's own individuality as the final end. Divine egotism. – People would have a legitimate right to be egotists if only they know their own ego, which one can do only if one has one.'¹⁰⁶ The cultivation of distinct individualities would result in 'manifold diversity', and it was this thought that Mill found so attractive in Humboldt's writings.

The English Romantics – Coleridge in particular – imported many of these new German ideas to Britain.¹⁰⁷ Coleridge's systematic attempt to bring this new conception of art to a British audience was expressed in a series of essays for *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* in 1814, but they met only with incomprehension on the part of his Bristol readership.¹⁰⁸ It fell to Friedrich Schlegel's older brother, August Wilhelm, the most widely read and appreciated German critic in Britain in the early nineteenth century, to introduce the new German understanding of art.¹⁰⁹ His lectures on art and literature, originally given in 1809–10, were translated into English by John Black in 1815.¹¹⁰ For Schlegel, as for other German writers, the value of aesthetic experience lay, on the one hand, in the fact that art was an external manifestation of the well-balanced intellect and character of unique individuals. On the other hand, its contemplation gave everybody the chance to raise their minds and senses to new perfection and experience themselves as unique individuals. This understanding provided public galleries with a new importance in contemporary life. One of August Schlegel's best-known texts, written with his wife Caroline, is particularly significant in this respect.¹¹¹ Here the Schlegels turned their attention not just to the production of harmonious unity in individual works of art but also to the reception of them by the spectators in the gallery.¹¹² Three friends – a craft-oriented artist, a writer with philosophical interests and a sensually refined woman – meet in the famous picture gallery in Dresden and discuss a selection of the masterpieces on display there, each contributing their own distinct perspective.¹¹³ The Schlegels refrain from privileging any one standpoint over the other. In contrast to the kind of connoisseurial comparative evaluation of a whole set of pictures against an objective standard of taste that had previously dominated art appreciation, here each picture is approached by the friends as a distinct individual entity from a distinct point of view. In the same way that great works of art represented unique creations, so too did they require and encourage distinct individual responses.

August Wilhelm Schlegel's lectures on the fine arts were particularly influential on Eastlake. At the age of 23, Eastlake had left England to study in Paris, Italy and Greece, and he arrived in Rome two years later at the end of 1818. Here he met and befriended many German artists and writers.¹¹⁴ While in Rome the young Eastlake started work on an essay entitled 'On the Philosophy of the Fine Arts'.¹¹⁵ In this essay he takes up and expands Schlegel's views on art.¹¹⁶ What was of particular interest to Eastlake was the German emphasis on individuality and particularity. He quotes approvingly a couplet by Schiller:

*Keiner sey gleich dem anderen, doch gleich sey Jeder dem Höchsten!
Wie das zu machen? Es sey Jeder vollendet in sich.*

Let none be like to another, yet let each resemble the highest!
But how to accomplish this? Say: – let each be complete in himself.¹¹⁷

According to the German Romantics, it is only when individual artists are at their most particular that they achieve their highest worth and at the same time give fullest expression to what is most distinctive in the culture of the time. In other words, the greater the individuality the more exemplary of its culture it becomes.

The way in which this notion of individuality had come to dominate conceptions of spectatorship in Britain in the nineteenth century can be seen in Giuseppe Gabrielli's image of a room in the National Gallery (pl. 3). Much as individuality in early nineteenth-century thought was capable of transcending particularity and becoming most general at the point of its greatest perfection, so the gallery visitors in this picture are shown to be both highly distinctive in their individuality while yet remaining ideal representatives of their type. There was, however, a further dimension to this understanding of individuality that proved enormously influential in the development of national galleries. The emphasis on the expression of artistic individuality led, in the writings of August Schlegel and others, to the idea that different cultures might be similarly distinctive.¹¹⁸ Understood as unified entities, they are seen to produce characteristic and unique forms of artistic endeavour as if they were individual artists. Such an organicist conception of cultures soon came to be the fundamental organising principle behind the arrangement of pictures in public galleries in Europe. It encouraged a presentation of artistic schools that went beyond the collection of the most esteemed masters. Works that previously might have been thought to be artistically inferior were now valued for their historical importance in the development of a national style. The first museum for which the historically complete representation of different artistic periods was made explicitly part of its mission was the *Königliches Museum* in Berlin. 'Very many galleries', Wilhelm von Humboldt argued, 'perhaps all known ones, can only be considered to be aggregates which came together over time without a plan. In contrast, the Royal Gallery here is exceptional in that it comprehends systematically all periods of painting, and the history of art can be studied from the beginnings.'¹¹⁹

The German emphasis on distinctiveness and individuality had led to the abandonment of the eighteenth-century canon of art and to a new appreciation of the diversity of styles across a historical spectrum. Instead of fixed ideals, what was now valued was the expression of distinctness and individuality, be it in individual artists, periods or countries. Eastlake was instrumental in introducing this view into Britain. As a young adult in Rome he had met two of the men, Karl Friedrich von Rumohr and Johann David Passavant, who later became famous as the founding fathers of art history.¹²⁰ On a trip to Germany via Flanders and the Netherlands he had also come into contact with another important art historian of the time, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, future director of the *Königliches Museum* in Berlin.¹²¹ Eastlake and his wife Elizabeth subsequently became the principal advocates of German art history in Britain: in 1836 Elizabeth Rigby (she became Lady Eastlake in 1849) translated Passavant's *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien*.¹²² Four years later Eastlake wrote a long appreciative review of Passavant's *Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi*,¹²³ and in 1842 edited the translation of the first part of Kugler's *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei*, a milestone in the development of art history as a discipline in Germany.¹²⁴ Finally, in 1854 Lady Eastlake translated Waagen's *Kunstwerke und Künstler in England*.¹²⁵ This familiarity with German historical ideas had a radical impact on Eastlake's understanding of what the National Gallery in London should offer its visitors. In line with the idea that a national gallery ought to provide a comprehensive display of schools and movements, Eastlake, from the moment he arrived at the National Gallery in 1843, attempted to acquire examples of early Italian art, despite the fact that the latter had

not been part of the established eighteenth-century canon. At that stage he still met with resistance. In response to one particular proposal he received a letter from the trustee and prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, informing him that the policy of the National Gallery should be to acquire

works of sterling merit that may serve as examples to the Artists of this country rather than purchase curiosities in painting valuable certainly as illustrating the progress of art, or the distinctions in the style of different Masters, but surely *less valuable* than works approaching to perfection.¹²⁶

Peel clearly perceived the works deposited in the National Gallery in the same way that he regarded the reserves of bullion in the Bank of England – they were imperishable guarantees of (aesthetic) value.¹²⁷ Consequently, more works by Annibale Carracci and several Guido Renis were acquired instead of those that Eastlake wished to buy in order to illustrate the developing history of art. When he returned as director in 1855, however, he used the increased powers of his new office to acquire many of the now-celebrated early Renaissance works in the collection. In the meantime, official opposition to the systematic collection and arrangement of art according to historical principles had also significantly diminished in Britain. Two years before his appointment as director, the Select Committee of 1853 officially acknowledged the merit of a comprehensive historical acquisition, based not least on the evidence of the director of the Berlin Gallery, Gustav Waagen:

The intelligent public of this country are daily becoming more alive to the truth, which has long been recognised by other enlightened nations, that the arts of design cannot be properly studied or rightly appreciated by means of insulated specimens alone; that in order to understand or profit by the great works, either of the ancient or modern schools of art, it is necessary to contemplate the genius which produced them, not merely in its final results, but in the mode of its operation, in its rise and progress, as well as in its perfection. . . . In order, therefore, to render the British National Gallery worthy of the name it bears, Your Committee think that the funds appropriated to the enlargement of the collection should be expended with a view, not merely of exhibiting to the public beautiful works of art, but of instructing the people in the history of that art, and of the age in which, and the men by whom, those works were produced.¹²⁸

Eastlake and the German art historians whom he brought to the British public's attention represented the first generation of nineteenth-century art professionals who promoted a view of art that was synchronic as well as diachronic: works of art were valued as unique expressions of their creators or periods, while their progression over time and between countries could be mapped chronologically.¹²⁹ Displayed in the newly founded national galleries across Europe, this increasingly influential view of art history had a very clear aim: the expressive unity valued in art was supposed to communicate itself to the spectator. 'An historical arrangement', Gustav Waagen argued in front of a Select Committee in 1836 in Britain, 'by following the spirit of the times and the genius of the artists, would produce an harmonious influence upon the mind of the spectator.'¹³⁰ In affecting the senses of the spectators, it was hoped that the works on display would raise their minds to new perfec-

tion and thus contribute to the education of well-rounded individuals indispensable to the new or (as in the case of Germany) emerging nation-states. Secondly, by gaining a sense of the progression of art history according to countries and nations, the viewers could imagine themselves as part of distinct national cultures. What this amounted to was that viewers were addressed as citizens of ideal liberal nation-states, as responsible individuals who shared a common set of cultural values. The museum thus became an important public arena for the articulation of an ideal of citizenship. But this conception of the museum's role was not the only one current at the time and it remained no more than an abstract vision for many of its visitors.

A Gallery for the Nation

The national galleries that opened throughout Europe in the first decades of the nineteenth century were not the first art museums freely accessible to the public. As we have seen, the Habsburg collection was, for example, made available to the general public free of charge in 1781. Particularly in German-speaking countries, aristocratic owners began to admit people without restrictions in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹³¹ The explosion of visitor numbers, however, moved the nineteenth-century national art galleries, particularly the one in London, into a different register. Visitor numbers grew exponentially every year at the National Gallery: from 60,000 in 1830 to 962,128 in 1859.¹³² Moreover, it was one thing to move around the private property of a prince, king or emperor, another to go and see what was owned by one's own nation. In Revolutionary France, the royal art collection was expropriated and declared to belong to the nation. The Louvre opened as the first national art museum in Europe in 1793. From then on museums all over Europe were represented as belonging to the nation, even if they were based on the royal collection, as was the case in Berlin and Munich.

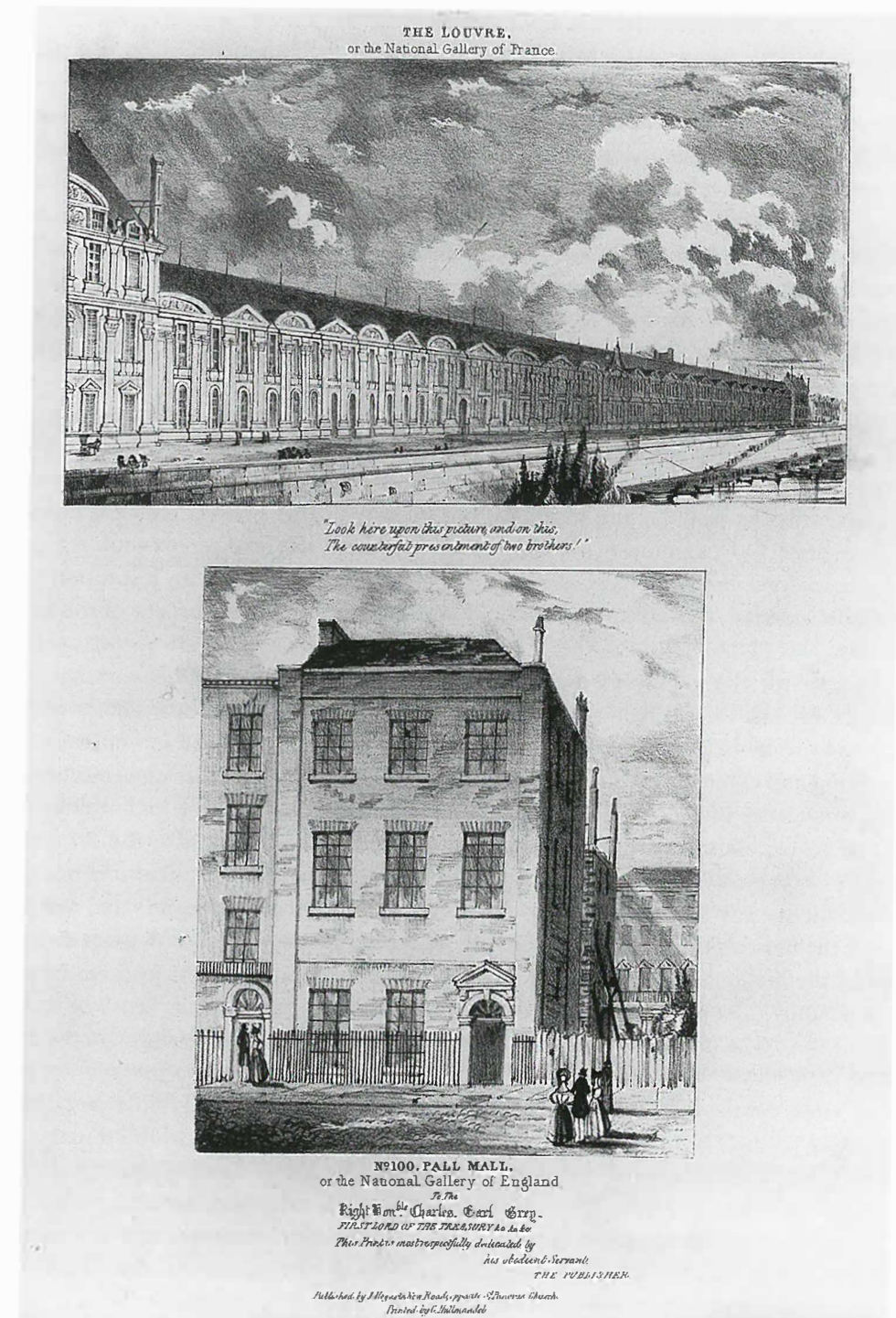
As has often been pointed out, the term 'nation' was a relatively recent invention in the terminology of political discourse.¹³³ Following the American and French revolutions, it came to mean 'the body of citizens whose collective sovereignty constituted them a state which was their political expression'.¹³⁴ The nation's citizens were those who had the right to express their political will, the right to vote. This was plainly not the case for many of the visitors whom the National Gallery attracted. Even the widening of the parliamentary franchise after the Reform Bill of 1832 extended the vote only to propertied, middle-class males. Women and working-class people were still excluded from suffrage. Yet many such people flocked to see the pictures.¹³⁵ Their behaviour, however, if we are to believe the evidence of the keeper, Thomas Uwins, was a long way from what was expected of National Gallery spectators. Uwins told a Select Committee, constituted to inquire into the affairs of the National Gallery in 1850, that many of the people who came were plainly not interested in experiencing what Waagen had called the 'harmonious influence' of the pictures on the mind:

I have seen that many persons use it [the National Gallery] as a place to eat luncheons in, and for refreshment, and for appointments . . . I have observed a great many things

which show that many persons who come, do not come really to see the pictures . . . On [one occasion], I saw some people, who seemed to be country people, who had a basket of provisions, and who drew their chairs round and sat down, and seemed to make themselves very comfortable, they had meat and drink; and when I suggested to them the impropriety of such a proceeding in such a place, they were very good-humoured, and a lady offered me a glass of gin, and wished me to partake of what they had provided; I represented to them that those things could not be tolerated.¹³⁶

As yet, the gallery as a public arena for the display of respectable citizenship was, or so it seemed to Uwins, lost on these people, despite the hopes of those who first agitated for the foundation of a national gallery in Britain.¹³⁷

In 1793 the Louvre had opened to the public, demonstrating to the world the new French Revolutionary conception of equal and inclusive nationhood. Even earlier, the radical John Wilkes had urged the British government in 1777 to purchase an art collection and make it freely available to the people.¹³⁸ In an attempt to ward off such initiatives, some aristocratic art patrons started to open their collections to the public on a regular basis. In 1805 a group of them founded the British Institution, to which they lent generously from their own collections,¹³⁹ and a year later the Marquis of Stafford opened the doors of Cleveland House. Yet, none of these places was freely accessible – a shilling entrance fee was charged at the British Institution, and to see the private collections visitors, more often than not, had to be known to the owners. Linda Colley has argued that, with the example of France in mind, the British ruling class feared that a state-sponsored national institution accessible to all would undermine their cultural and political leadership.¹⁴⁰ In fact, when it eventually bought the Angerstein collection for the nation, the government continued the tradition of leaving the nation's artistic heritage in the hands of an elite of rich connoisseurs. The National Gallery's powerful group of trustees was drawn from a small circle of aristocratic collectors led by the prime minister. In their first formal meeting held on 7 February 1828, the trustees even referred to the museum as the 'Royal National Gallery'.¹⁴¹ What is striking about this is that (in contrast to other national galleries such as the Königlich Museum of Berlin) no royal collection formed the nucleus of the National Gallery, nor was royal money provided to fund its building. In Berlin, even the position of the museum (opposite the monarch's residence) symbolically asserted the leading role played by royal patronage in national life. By contrast, in Britain prior to 1870 there was, as David Cannadine has argued, a strong current of hostility towards any moves designated to enhance monarchical power.¹⁴² The British aristocracy at that stage had no wish (or need) to promote the role of royalty as that of head of the nation. So, when the aristocratic trustees started privately to call the National Gallery 'Royal' it was merely a defensive gesture on the part of the old elite, asserting its claim to leadership of the nation (and not only in matters of taste) at a time when this had come to be called into question. Indeed, the rather provisional installation of the pictures in their former owner's house at Pall Mall elicited unfavourable comparison with France (pl. 18). Whereas the nation was invited to a former palace in Paris, the building in London appeared as a half-hearted gesture.



18 Charles Joseph Hullmandel, *The Louvre, or the National Gallery of France, and No. 100 Pall Mall, or the National Gallery of England*, circa 1830, engraving.

By the 1830s, however, after the limited extension of the franchise, an important group of British radicals advocated a broader social base for the National Gallery. But they no longer equated free access to a national collection with the rights of citizenship, as their predecessors had done. Instead, they emphasised its importance to British manufacturers. Since the eighteenth century, artists had campaigned for support by using the argument that cultivation of art had the capacity to 'descend to the subordinate Branches of Design', and so would make home industry more competitive internationally.¹⁴³ This was a congenial argument for those utilitarian-inspired radicals who became the strongest voice in opposition after the parliamentary election of 1832.¹⁴⁴ When the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the state of the arts in 1835, it was dominated by members associated with James and John Stuart Mill and the Benthamites. The Committee was chaired by the Mill's friend William Ewart, and of the fifteen delegates only the three other radicals, Joseph Brotherton, Henry Thomas Hope and John Bowring, consistently attended the meetings. Witness after witness in the Committee's meetings answered variations of the following question: 'Do you consider English manufactures superior as far as regards the manufacture of goods, but inferior in that portion which is connected with the arts?'¹⁴⁵ Unanimously, they answered 'yes', and the final report took the opportunity to endorse the National Gallery on utilitarian grounds. It was an institution where, the report asserted, the working man could improve his taste to the benefit of the nation's industry.

The case for the gallery as a place for the practical instruction of working people, however, became increasingly marginal at the end of the 1830s.¹⁴⁶ The utilitarian radicals lost their strong voice in Parliament and the vision of a people united in improving manufacturing and commerce started to fall apart. The rise of the Chartist movement testified to the emergence of a distinct class-consciousness among the working and middle classes and led to increasing conflict between the two groups. Beginning with the Birmingham Riots in 1839, the 1840s – years of hunger and acute distress among agricultural and industrial workers – saw a series of violent clashes between Chartist supporters and the police. One of the most riotous assemblies, brutally dispersed by the police, took place directly in front of the National Gallery in March 1848.¹⁴⁷ Although the Chartist insurrections were suppressed by the end of the 1840s, the movement engendered a strong sense of working-class identity, which was to continue in the politics of the labour movement in the second half of the century.¹⁴⁸

From now on the National Gallery's purpose came to be understood differently. Instead of looking to the National Gallery to improve the working man's taste – a separate institution specialising in applied art objects was built for this in South Kensington in 1852 (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) – its purpose was now seen to be that of polishing the rough proletarian manners of the working classes into more restrained and moderate modes of behaviour.¹⁴⁹ While the Select Committee in 1836 inquired into the 'improvement in taste',¹⁵⁰ the Select Committee of 1850 sought to promote 'improvement in the character of the visitors'.¹⁵¹ The argument that art could be a force for moral improvement was not new, of course; it had, for example, been at the heart of Reynolds's academic art theory.¹⁵² But under the effects of a decade of violent riots and insurrections it gathered force and

came to be championed by influential people from John Ruskin to John Stuart Mill.¹⁵³ Visiting the National Gallery fulfilled a two-fold purpose: negatively, it diverted appetites that might otherwise find expression in coarser and more destructive form; and positively, by engaging in pleasures of the more elevated kind the senses and minds of those who participated in them would, it was hoped, become polished and refined. While earlier Select Committees had received plenty of reassurance as to the good conduct of the visitors, including 'mechanics that come . . . to see the pictures, and not to see the company',¹⁵⁴ this was not the case in 1850. Fear of improper behaviour now dominated the Report of the Select Committee inquiring into the affairs of the National Gallery. As was evident in Uwins's statement quoted above, there was concern that people were using the gallery as a space for base recreations rather than moral education. 'It appears', the 1850 Report concluded,

that the Gallery is frequently crowded by large masses of people, consisting not merely of those who come for the purpose of seeing the pictures, but also of persons having obviously for their object the use of the rooms for wholly different purposes, either for shelter in case of bad weather, or as a place in which children of all ages may recreate and play, and not infrequently as one where food and refreshments may conveniently be taken.¹⁵⁵

To emphasise the moral value of individuality was a way of discouraging such common crowd behaviour. Redecorating and reordering the gallery – as Eastlake did in 1861 by uncluttering the walls and taking the subjective viewing position of visitors into account – was an important step in promoting an attitude of individual contemplation. In contrast to Chartists like Feargus O'Connor, Eastlake and his keeper Ralph Wornum upheld a classless vision of society made up of respectable individuals. Questioned by a Select Committee a decade after Uwins, Wornum emphasised that he could no longer see any difference between the classes in the National Gallery.¹⁵⁶ He and Eastlake shared this equalising view of the museum with such diverse writers and public figures as the Christian socialist Charles Kingsley and John Stuart Mill.¹⁵⁷

The promise of citizenship, however, as it was at least implied by the discourse of individuality and embedded in the display of the National Gallery, remained politically unfulfilled at that point. The many women and working men who visited the gallery in the early and mid-nineteenth century were not yet expected to aspire to a politically enfranchised form of citizenship. It took several more decades before working-class men received voting rights and even longer for women. Nonetheless, it would be nice to think that their experience in the gallery contributed towards the successive widening of the franchise in the second half of the nineteenth century and towards the increasingly forceful agitation by the women's and labour movements for equal rights. The next wave of innovation in the display of art, however, had nothing to do with increased political participation. On the contrary, it was the result of widely felt political and cultural alienation around 1900 and conceived of the museum as a private retreat.



2

Interiority and Intimacy

Colour Vision and the Display of Art in German Museums around 1900

By the mid-nineteenth century a consensus had emerged throughout Europe as to what was the best display for art in galleries. Pictures were hung on red or dull green walls, mostly in two tiers, although sometimes by necessity in more. The works were organised by schools and presented as products of the historical environment in which they were created. While subjective experience was emphasised, both artworks and visitors were conceived of as universal in the sense that the same set of visual and cultural determinants were assumed to govern all individuals, periods and nations. Distinctiveness and individuality were valued, but only as variations on this basic theme.

Nothing had called this consensus into question when the Königliche Gemäldegalerie opened in 1877 in the German town of Kassel (pl. 19). It was closely modelled on Leo von Klenze's Pinakothek in Munich and housed the famous collection of mainly Dutch and Flemish art that had been assembled more than a century earlier by the Landgrave of Hesse, Wilhelm VIII. As in all nineteenth-century public art galleries, in Kassel money and material wealth were lavished on the building's exterior and its entrance hall. A colourful grand staircase was richly decorated and led to the exhibition rooms on the second floor.¹ Here, however, the appearance was more restrained. As far as the nineteenth-century curators were concerned, an ideal display was one in which pictures were shown with a minimum of surrounding distractions. In 1850 Charles Eastlake was quite explicit about this when he stated that 'in looking at the pictures in a picture gallery, you ought to see no other object but the pictures'.² Except for the use of gold in the ceiling and of richer materials in the doors, the walls were kept simple at Kassel. They were, conventionally enough, lined with dark red tapestry in the sky-lit rooms in the middle of the building, while the colour in the side-lit cabinets alternated between dark red and dull green. Green, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was considered a neutral colour in the nineteenth century and red was held to produce the most harmonious background for pictures. As in London, Paris, Berlin and Munich, the works were organised by school, and presented as products of their historical environments. In Kassel, as in most nineteenth-century galleries, every-



19 Heinrich Dehn-Rotfelser, Königliche Gemäldegalerie, Kassel, circa 1890, postcard.

thing was directed towards producing the optimal viewing conditions for individual visitors contemplating the individual character of artworks and the schools to which they belonged.

The Royal Picture Gallery in Kassel was an initiative of the local bourgeoisie and is representative of the continuation of this class's aspirations in the cultural and political realms even after the failed revolution of 1848 and the strengthening of monarchical power in the wake of German unification in 1871.³ Symbolic of the peaceful coexistence of bourgeois cultural ideals and monarchic state control was a colossal marble bust of the newly crowned emperor, Wilhelm I, by the fashionable Berlin sculptor Reinhold Begas. It was placed at the back wall of the staircase, one of the first objects visitors saw as they entered the gallery. Elsewhere, however, the contributions of local citizens were emphasised. For example, Heinrich von Dehn-Rotfelser, the museum's architect, was at pains to point out that artists from Kassel had executed the decorations and sculptures.⁴

This consensus with regard to the display of art was called into question by a number of influential German museum directors in the last decades of the nineteenth century. A new museum experience was created, one that shunned those public aspirations of the previous decades in favour of privacy and interiority. This mode of display lasted until the 1930s and emphasised domesticity and intimate feelings rather than the universal conditions of creation and perception.⁵

The Founding of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin

The first cracks in the hitherto accepted mode of gallery decoration and display appeared in the wake of the opening of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 1876.⁶ What was distinctive about this art gallery was that it was founded as a German version of the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris. Designed as a complement to Schinkel's Alte Museum just across the road, it was to be devoted exclusively to national art. But the idea that there should be a museum of contemporary 'patriotic' art in Germany goes back much earlier.⁷ In educated bourgeois circles prior to the liberal revolution of 1848 the idea of developing a shared sense of cultural nationhood was seen as a necessary part of a process that would lead to a unified and constitutional German nation-state.⁸ It was thought that a gallery of German art would provide a stage on which a liberal cultural identity could be articulated for the nation. Nowhere, however, did the failure of this project become more apparent than at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin. After unification in 1871 the Nationalgalerie served the monarchical interests of the Prussian house of Hohenzollern in asserting its dominance within the German union. When the gallery opened, Berlin was no longer just the capital of Prussia but also of the German Reich (pl. 20). Yet the core of pictures on display, specially commissioned for the Nationalgalerie, contained a large number of history paintings celebrating the Prussian army's battles and victories. Visitors were invited to mount the

20 Friedrich August Stüler and Johann Heinrich Strack, the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 2001.

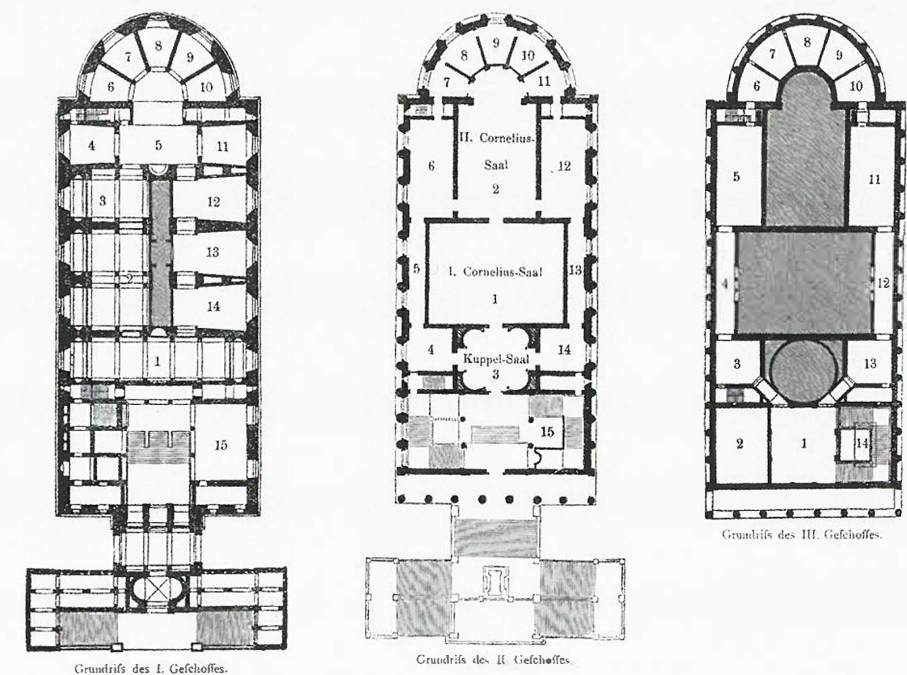




21 Max Jordan, display of cartoons by Peter Cornelius in the upper floor of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1903. At this point large history paintings had been placed in front of Cornelius's sketches (here Wilhelm Kaulbach's *Battle at Salamis on 20th September 480 AD*; on the easel is Walter Leistikow's *Grimewaldsee*).

spacious exterior staircase unfolding symmetrically on both sides of the façade and then enter the building on the first floor, where the two double-height main rooms were located.⁹ The latter contained Peter Cornelius's large sketches for the frescoes that Friedrich Wilhelm IV (King of Prussia from 1840 to 1861) had commissioned for a planned dynastic burial ground, the Campo Santo, of the Hohenzollerns (pl. 21). While the museum's exterior inscription ('German Art MDCCCLXXI') declared it to be representative of the entire nation, the decoration and collection demonstrated otherwise.¹⁰ The Nationalgalerie was, initially at least, a public space that celebrated and asserted the Hohenzollern's hegemony. The politically motivated nationalism of bourgeois liberalism was here transmuted into a kind of affirmative royalism.¹¹

As the restoration that was completed in December 2001 has shown, the original interior was sumptuously decorated. A colourful mix of materials dominated the first transept (Room 1 in pl. 22). Here sculptures were placed beneath lunette paintings depicting scenes from the Nibelung sagas. While a warm orange-pink colour suffused this room, the sculp-



22 Ground plan of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin. From *Katalog der Königlichen National-Galerie zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1901).

ture hall to its left had dark red walls that made for a gloomily dark effect (pl. 23). Most rooms seem to have been kept in conventional gallery red, except for the cupola room on the first floor whose multicoloured scheme dominated by green provided a suitably rich overture to the museum's *sanctum sanctorum*, the Cornelius Rooms. Like the museum's principal colour scheme, the first director's acquisition policy was unadventurous. Max Jordan favoured art by academicians, a policy that aligned him with Wilhelm II, who ascended the throne in 1888. Wilhelm II was a keen lover of art and took a great interest in the Nationalgalerie. He favoured an idealistic, classicising style of art that would provide a moral uplift for the public and at the same time celebrate German (and, implicitly, royal) achievements.¹² While criticism with regard to the collection's content had been voiced before, the patent link between the emperor and the Nationalgalerie meant that there was a political dimension in the opposition to the museum's collection and display. It gathered force among certain parts of the educated German bourgeoisie during the last decades of the nineteenth century.



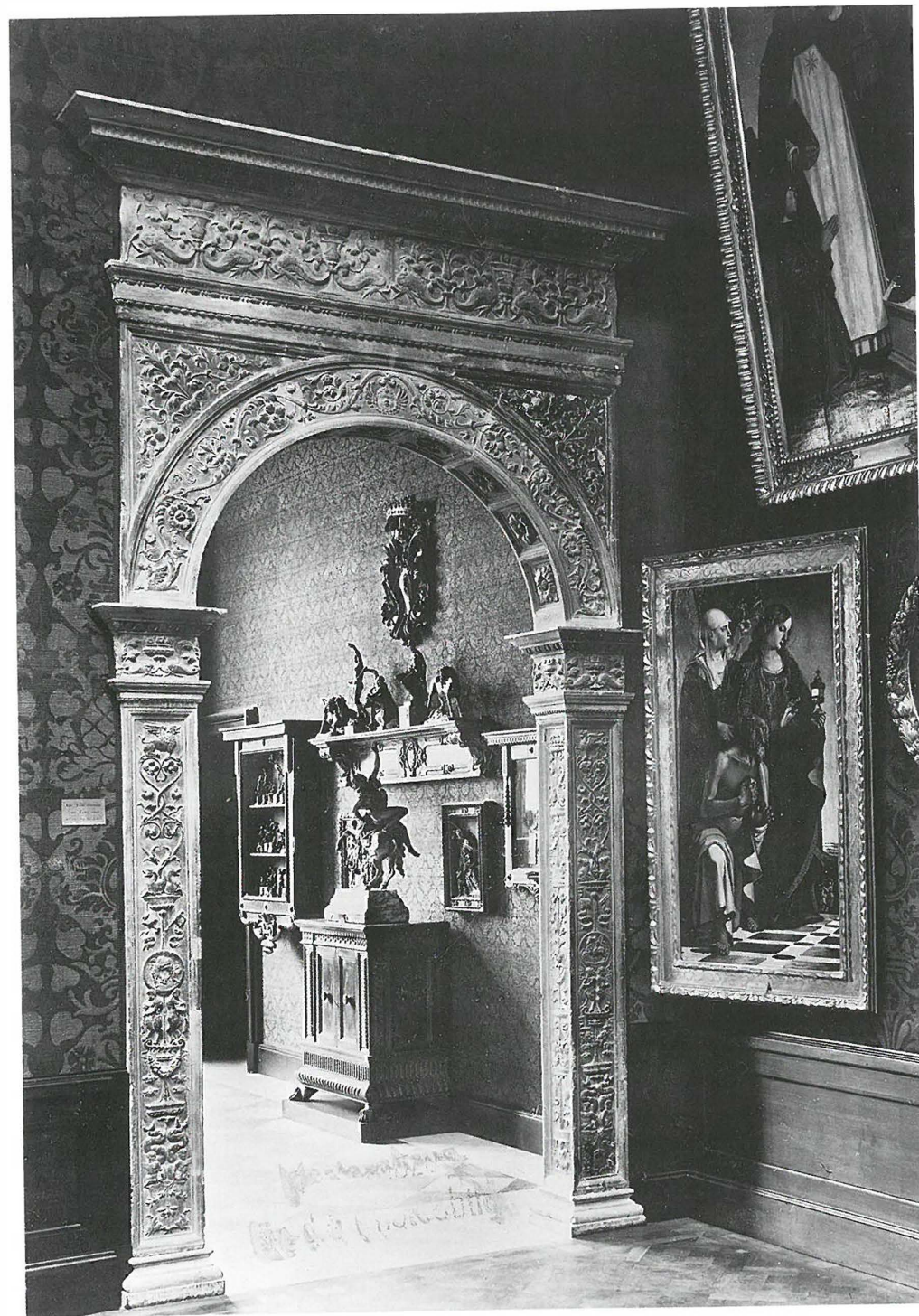
23 Sculpture hall on the ground floor of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1879.

At Home in the Gallery

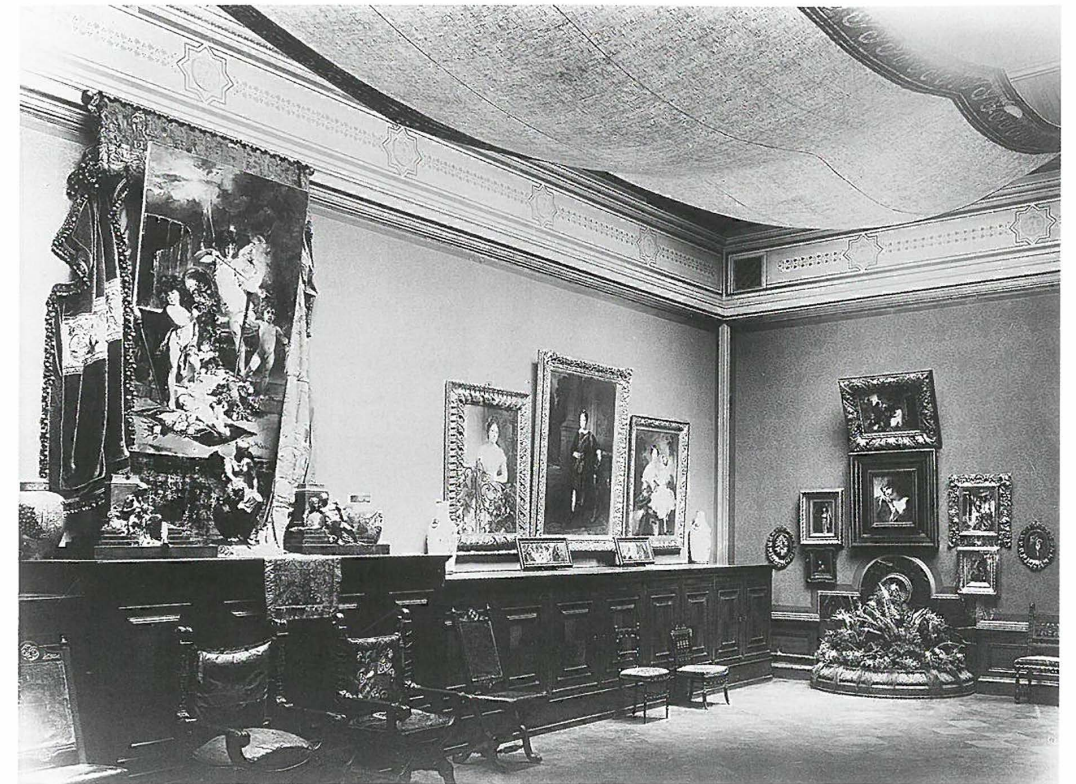
Wilhelm von Bode and Hugo von Tschudi in Berlin

This was a period in which large sections of the liberal bourgeoisie found themselves increasingly alienated by the central government.¹³ Their loss of political power during Bismarck's chancellorship contributed to the decline of a liberal consensus. Historians have argued that this decline led to the appearance of a range of interest groups with different programmes, a fragmentation that was also apparent in the art world.¹⁴ Nevertheless, one feature was common to all the different aesthetic approaches that were advanced at the time: a tendency to psychologise and to focus on the interiority of creating or perceiving individuals. This went hand in hand with a turn away from the public representational character of cultural institutions towards a more private and intimate form of exhibition.

One of the first museum directors to reject the generic display of art in nineteenth-century museums was Wilhelm von Bode. In the 1880s Bode was director of the Renaissance art collection housed in the Alte Museum. He later became general director of all Berlin's central art museums, including the Nationalgalerie. Early on, Bode went public with his criticism of the deadening effect of traditional multi-tiered displays on red or green walls. For him such a display was monotonous and reduced the museum to a mere warehouse.¹⁵ In various exhibitions during the 1880s and 1890s that subsequently became famous and much copied in other countries, Bode experimented with a modified form of the period room that was developing in arts and crafts museums at the time.¹⁶ Instead of using surviving historical settings and materials, however, he turned for inspiration to the interiors of the homes of contemporary private collectors. The Renaissance and the eighteenth century were, for different reasons, popular models for the houses of the newly rich industrialists and bankers of late nineteenth-century Berlin. Bode was in close contact with most of them and gave them connoisseurial advice. He found in their homes a freer, more aesthetically pleasing use of historical materials than was the current standard in museums aiming at a re-creation of authentic historical settings.¹⁷ What this amounted to is still apparent in the photographs that survive of some of Bode's displays in the new Renaissance art gallery in Berlin, the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (today's Bode Museum), which opened in 1904. In order to avoid warehouse fatigue, the whole museum was designed under Bode's aegis so that rooms changed in size and character; wall arrangements showed marked contrasts; and vistas were interrupted and opened up unexpectedly.¹⁸ In the Italian section on the upper floor, door frames and ceiling decorations evoked fifteenth-century interiors. Furniture interspersed throughout also alluded to historical settings (pl. 24). Yet all this played a subordinate role to the works of art on display. Their artful arrangement on the walls remained the focus of attention and assured that no one would mistake the rooms for an authentic Renaissance environment. The director of the Nationalgalerie, Max Jordan, tried something similar in an exhibition of the work of Gustav Richter in 1884 (pl. 25). Furniture, carpets, vases, sculptures and rich drapery were used to allude to but not fully emulate a (in this case) contemporary, domestic environment.

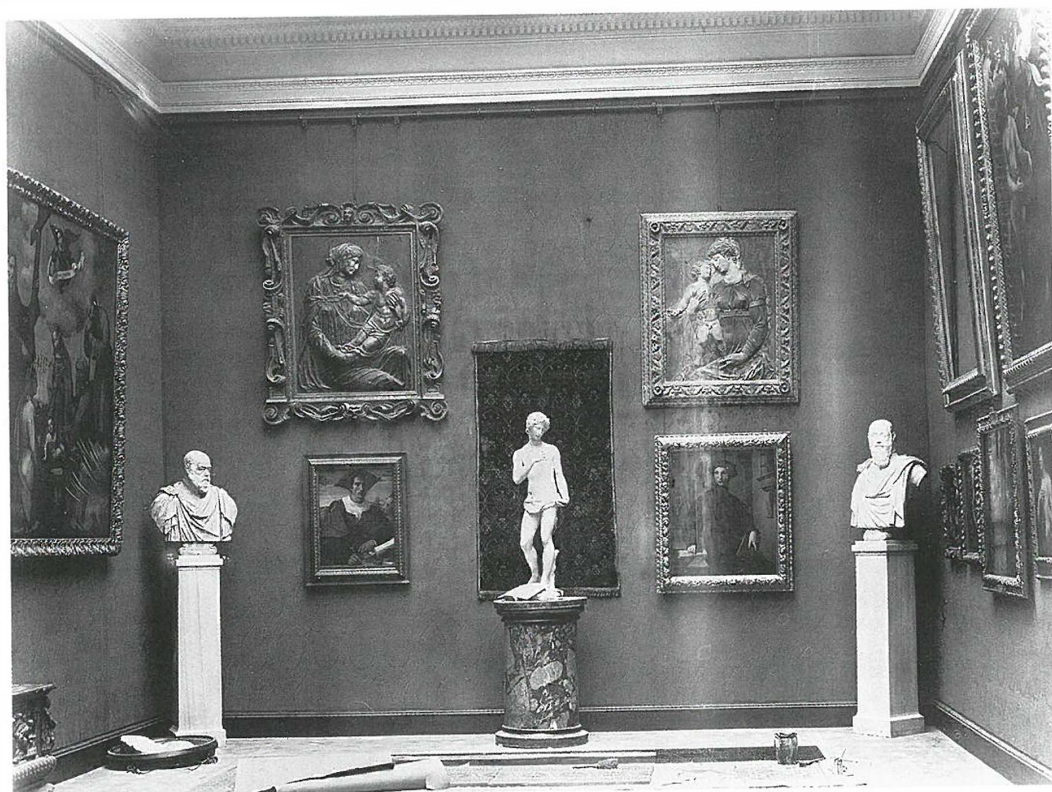


24 Wilhelm von Bode, display of Italian Renaissance art in Room 37 on the upper floor of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, 1904.



25 Max Jordan, *Gustav Richter* exhibition in the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1884.

But this evocation of a private interior in the museum proved to be only a transitional mode, and Bode himself moved increasingly away from it in the 1890s. Instead of simulating a historical setting for works of art, he began to emphasise colours and textures and to highlight the different materiality of the works on display in order to bring out the particular formal qualities inherent in each object. In fact, when the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum opened in 1904, Bode only occasionally used the period room reference. He did so most famously and thoroughly in the simulation of a Byzantine chapel on the ground floor. But more important for his displays at that stage in his career were purely formal considerations. Indeed, Bode turned some rooms into composed little works of art themselves by arranging the works in symmetrical groups of materially different objects. For example, in the Cinquecento Room, Bode placed the sculpture he (controversially) attributed to Michelangelo in front of his very own kelim (pl. 26). The surrounding works highlighted the axis of the arrangement and the room. Sometimes pictures framed sculptures; at other times it was the other way round.¹⁹ The first indication of this new formal display strategy appeared in 1896 in Bode's installation of bronzes at the Alte Museum. Later, he rarely commented on his display strategies, but in 1896 he clearly still felt the need to justify his decisions:



26 Wilhelm von Bode, display of Italian Renaissance art in Room 45 on the upper floor of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, 1904.

The yellow material [for the background] was chosen because bronzes are most clearly perceived on this; in order to avoid fatigue the showcases are lined with a yellowish green, which has a similar effect [as the yellow walls]. . . . The arrangement was done in an attempt to produce a pleasing variation and harmonic appearance while taking into account the historical order. . . .²⁰

This new emphasis on producing a pleasing effect on the eye of the spectator ran counter to the museum's original mission to educate the viewer in the progression of art through the ages and nations.

When Jordan retired in 1895, his successor, Hugo von Tschudi, who had been Bode's assistant at the Alte Museum, realised this new emphasis on sensuality with dramatic effects in the Nationalgalerie. Armed with the money of private donors, he bypassed the authority of the acquisitions committee (which was under the control of the Kaiser) and embarked on a buying spree of French Impressionists and their European disciples. In so doing he consciously flouted the gallery's dedication to German art. Together with the

artist Max Liebermann he visited Degas' studio in Paris in 1896 and contacted the Impressionists' dealer Durand-Ruel, from whom he bought Manet's *Au Jardin d'hiver*, Degas' pastel *La Conversation* and Monet's *Vue de Vétheuil*, this last unseen by him.²¹ Moreover, between 1896 and 1899 he subjected the Nationalgalerie to a decorative overhaul that resulted in one of the most stunning displays in the history of museums. Following Bode's lead, Tschudi emphatically renounced the previous commitment of picture galleries to historical education. He was committed to showing art in a way that, instead of raising historical consciousness, appealed to contemporary tastes. A few years later he explained that the contemplation of past art made no sense if it was not informed by the artistic concerns of the present day.²² Accordingly, his display strategy was primarily governed by beliefs about the aesthetic responses of contemporary viewers that went well beyond the general psychological considerations of the previous generation of art gallery directors.

Like Bode, Tschudi was keen to avoid the psychological fatigue thought to be the pernicious consequence of the monotonous massing of artworks in traditional museums. Thus the number of works on display was radically reduced so that most could be hung in a single row – as we have seen, a display scheme that was often called for but seldom realised. While the wall colours on the first floor remained relatively conventional – alternating between red and green – it was in the first room on the west side to the left of the cupola hall that visitors encountered what was possibly the most remarkable installation of art to be found in a gallery before the 1920s. Here Tschudi exhibited his crown jewels – the French Impressionists. Unfortunately, no photograph of the room survives, but descriptions in the daily and specialist press provide a vivid impression.²³ Above bright red wooden panelling rose a pinkish-yellow and light green striped wall that was met near the ceiling by a golden pressed-leather frieze. On one wall was Manet's *Au Jardin d'hiver* (pl. 27), flanked with landscapes by Monet and Cézanne. The sparse hang continued opposite with three landscapes by Courbet, Billotte and Cazin. The window side showed Degas' *Conversation* and landscapes by Sisley and Pissarro. In the adjacent corridor, where other foreign artists were shown, Tschudi decorated the walls with green material that alternated silk and velvet stripes separated by thin yellow lines. The apse cabinets on this floor showed pre-1850 German art above white panels with alternating yellow and green silk tapestry. None of the contemporary private collectors of Impressionism had shown their collections in such a setting. The Bernstein collection – one of the most famous in late nineteenth-century Berlin and often visited by Tschudi – displayed the Impressionists in a Rococo interior, while the artist Max Liebermann, who had introduced Tschudi to the French Impressionists, showed off his collection of French art in his grand Renaissance-style home next to the Brandenburg Gate.²⁴ Although monochrome striped wallpaper was fashionable at the time in interior decoration, the multicoloured stripes used by Tschudi in the Impressionist room were very unusual.²⁵ Showing art in a way that appealed to the artistic concerns of the present day clearly did not mean for Tschudi that his displays should simply copy the trends of modern interior design.

Yet in experimenting with a variety of textures and colours, Tschudi and Bode were in line with the privileging of abstract formal elements that was beginning to dominate both



27 Edouard Manet, *Au Jardin d'hiver*, 1879, oil on canvas, 115 × 150 cm. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

experimental psychology and art criticism. The liberation of colour as a formal element was the central theme of Julius Meier-Graefe's famous *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst*, the first history of modern art, which appeared originally in three volumes in 1904.²⁶ There was, however, no unified view as to the meaning of such abstract forms. Meier-Graefe, for instance, rigorously excluded all emotional and thematic associations from his discussion of colour. Yet these issues were of great interest to others at the time, as is borne out by the huge number of publications, starting in the 1870s, that explored the associative qualities of colours – for instance, the association of the sound of shawms with the fresh and cheerful yellow of meadows strewn with buttercups, the flute's sound with the soft blue sky of warm summer nights, and so on.²⁷ Others discussed the

historical development of colour, paying attention to changing understandings of its cultural significance – for instance, the way in which yellow was understood as the colour of jealousy.²⁸

What these discussions shared was a trust in the immediate emotional impact of colour and line. This common ground was in no small measure due to the emergence of a powerful psycho-physiological discourse that followed in the wake of Gustav Theodor Fechner's attempt in 1876 to develop a psychological aesthetic 'from below'.²⁹ Fechner's experiments with the emotional connotation of lines had a far-reaching influence in artistic circles. They were, for example, taken up by interior designers such as the Belgian Henry van de Velde and elaborated by van de Velde's earliest champion in Germany, the critic Karl Scheffler. Scheffler specifically advocated the use of both colour and ornamental lines as a means of achieving emotional expression in interiors.³⁰ However, the most prominent and rigorous exponent of the emotional impact of line and colour in Germany around 1900 was the philosophical psychologist Theodor Lipps. Lipps became a leading advocate of 'empathy theory', which greatly influenced popular aesthetics in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³¹ Empathy theory discussed aesthetic experience primarily in terms of the projection of people's inner states onto objects and in so doing moved art reception away from classical learning, making it contemporary and accessible to everyone.³²

There is no doubt that Tschudi's display of the French Impressionists was inspired by these developments. The rich texture and colour certainly owed something to the display scheme developed by Durand-Ruel's Paris gallery and to Secessionist exhibitions.³³ In the late 1890s the Munich Secession, for example, employed wall coverings in fashionable monochrome stripes in strong hues of green, red and yellow and was praised for the intimate atmosphere of its shows (pl. 28).³⁴ Yet Tschudi's yellow and green stripes together with the red panelling appear not to have had a direct contemporary precedent in either gallery or interior decoration. More than anything it was the popular psychologies of the day that inspired his installations. Tschudi was explicit about the psychological power of abstract formal elements and our empathetic response. Their purpose was to make us 'empathetically feel the stimulus of the line, the inner life of form, the manifold of the play of light and air, the harmony of strong colours or the effects of muted moods'.³⁵ It is very likely that his Impressionist installation was meant to create just such a direct emotional response, one that was evocative of nature. He believed that only when painting turns to nature 'does it receive bounteous new life'.³⁶ Hence, most of the works he acquired were landscape paintings, or, like Manet's *Au Jardin d'hiver*, set in nature. The green and yellow stripes of the wallpaper in the Impressionist room would have been intended to evoke associations of the freshness of green leaves and the cheerfulness of yellow sunlight, offset by the reddish earth colours in the wood panelling.

It is very likely that Tschudi dared only to experiment with the interior decoration of rooms that displayed foreign artists or work that he thought would matter less to the Kaiser and his influential friends among the German academicians. Yet instead of less attention, his French acquisitions received more, thus leading to Tschudi's downfall. By 1898 the heat had risen in the art world of Berlin and his installation opened in an atmosphere of tension.



28 Munich Secession exhibition, coloured woodcut after J. Mukarovsky. From *Meggendorfer-Blaetter: Zeitschrift für Humor und Kunst*, vol. 53 (1903), p. 99.

The Berlin Secession was founded officially that year under the presidency of Liebermann, whose painting style was strongly influenced by the loose brushwork of the French Impressionists.³⁷ Liebermann was by now closely associated with Tschudi, and a hostile debate as to the merits of Tschudi's purchases of foreign art ensued. On 11 April 1899 a visit by Wilhelm II to the gallery resulted in an edict that required that henceforth even donations to the collection must have the Kaiser's approval. From this point on, it was open warfare. When, for example, on this same visit the Kaiser took issue with Tschudi, complaining that now Berlin too had a Secession rebelling against the traditions of art, Tschudi replied that he himself welcomed the development. Pressing the point further, the Kaiser fulminated against 'this disgusting cult of personality, which the people engage in . . . that is sheer social democracy'. To this Tschudi again replied that, on the contrary, it was a very aristocratic principle.³⁸ In 1901 the Kaiser clearly laid out his views in a public speech describing what he considered to be valuable art: one that looks to the ancients and follows the unchangeable laws of beauty and harmony. Famously, he was reported as saying that art must be elevating and should not descend into the gutter.³⁹ In his view the Secessionists did the latter in emulating pernicious French styles. Shortly afterwards, Tschudi was forced to resign from his post as director of the Nationalgalerie.⁴⁰

Alfred Lichtwark at Hamburg

Tschudi, however, was not alone in using strong colours and textures in his displays. In the last decade of the nineteenth century a broader reform movement was gathering force, particularly among those gallery directors who championed a modern art that departed from staid academic conceptions. It was their common conviction that abstract formal elements had the capacity to make an immediate emotional impact. Broadening the constituency for art was a major goal for many of them, and the emphasis on colour promised a way of making art meaningful on first encounter, without the need for prior learning.

It was for this reason that Alfred Lichtwark lobbied for a major change in the display of art at the Kunsthalle in Hamburg, where he had become director in 1886. According to Ludwig Justi (Tschudi's successor as director of the Nationalgalerie), Alfred Lichtwark kept the Hamburg gallery in disorder because he was trying to get a new building.⁴¹ But this was only partly true. In 1889 Lichtwark created a more sumptuous entrance hall with light yellow walls, dark green panels and golden architectural details. He also recorded that he had refurbished parts of the gallery and a series of new rooms with red wall coverings, 'while the old [rooms] still contained the old inadequate wall colours'.⁴² It is most likely that the colour that Lichtwark now found unacceptable was the traditional greyish green. Ten years later, however, the conventional gallery red had, in his eyes, become inadequate too. Lichtwark redecorated the rooms for the collection of old Hamburg masters and, after extensive trials with coloured materials, showed the medieval Master Francke in rooms with white walls, ceilings and panels. Lichtwark believed that Francke's colourful qualities were best brought out on this 'neutral ground'.⁴³ The curtains in the room, however, were a rich yellow, and the mahogany chairs and benches, fabricated in imitation of medieval Hamburg furniture in the local arts and crafts museum, had a dark green upholstery. By 1900 Lichtwark clearly believed that an aesthetically free use of historical interior settings was the best way to display art.

Lichtwark, however, did have his eyes firmly set on a new building. And it was here that he intended to realise his full vision. In 1896 he published an essay in *Pan* entitled 'Palace Windows and French Doors' in which he decried the illogicality of windows that reached to the ground but were nevertheless covered with heavy curtains. He took the 'simple fisher people of the Baltic and the North Sea' as a model with their delight in fresh and unpretentious colours and recommended their preference for broad but not low windows. Painted in the basic hues of white, red, green or blue, they, according to Lichtwark, established the key to the colour scheme employed inside. The advantage of such windows was that, placed high, they lit the walls and not the floor and, happily, made curtains redundant. They were indicative of a way of living that Lichtwark saw in stark contrast to common contemporary practice:

Just as living creatures who reside in caverns become mad or blind, so many interior decorators today have accommodated themselves to the lack of light. They cannot bear the brightness, which appears during cleaning days through uncovered windows.⁴⁴

In fact, Lichtwark, like his friends Baron Eberhard von Bodenhausen and Hermann Muthesius, looked to the English and Scottish Arts and Crafts movements for inspiration. It was Muthesius who had drawn his friends' attention to what he believed to be the honesty, functionality and purity of English and Scottish designs.⁴⁵ According to Bodenhausen, architects like Charles Voysey and Charles Rennie Mackintosh were uniquely in touch with the requirements of an intimate home life, and their architecture and decoration were true expressions of freedom, functionality and individualism. Moreover, their spirit was closer to what he and his friends believed to be the German national character than French modes of design.⁴⁶ The English and Scottish interiors seemed truer to the simple forms of living developed by the fisher folk of the North that Lichtwark championed.

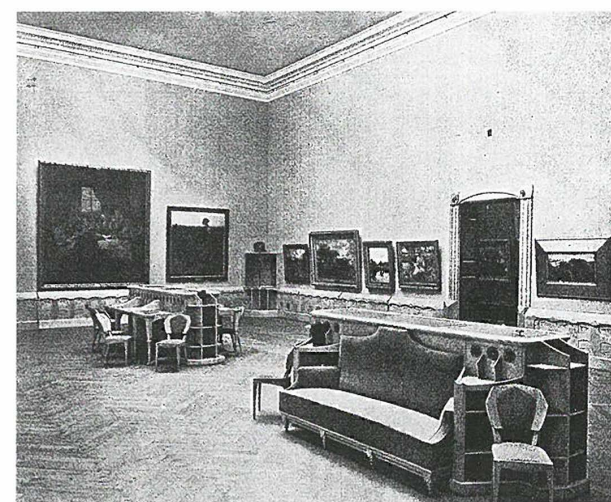
Like Tschudi, Lichtwark believed that the display of art in the gallery should be informed by contemporary aesthetic concerns; in contrast to Tschudi, he turned to a fashionable Arts and Crafts movement for inspiration. Lichtwark thought that there should be no difference between a private house (of the kind that Voysey created in England) and an art gallery.⁴⁷ While not fully realised in Hamburg, Lichtwark's ideas became influential for subsequent museum designs after he had outlined his vision to colleagues at a conference in Mannheim in 1903.⁴⁸ Museums, he declared, had in the past been built for the sake of their imposing façades, and he calculated for his audience what this risible attention to public display meant in terms of the loss of interior wall space. Yet it was for the sake of this interior space that museums had been erected. If a new museum were to be constructed it should be from the inside out, he argued. 'It must be forbidden to even think of the façade', Lichtwark declared, before the best solution for the ground plan is found, one that secures the best light and maximum extension of wall space.⁴⁹ Monumental staircases should be avoided; windows should be calculated strictly according to the size of the rooms they had to light. As he had demanded earlier for residential buildings, windows should sit high in the walls and reach nearly to the ceiling.⁵⁰ In fact, Lichtwark's ideas amounted to a renunciation of the nineteenth-century notion of the museum as a public institution in favour of a vision of its being a place of calm and quiet retreat:

The ideal would be broad corridors unfilled by anything and showrooms only accessible from the corridor and unconnected to each other. Whoever leaves the stream of visitors channelling through the corridor, and enters a room, is saved from the maelstrom that sweeps him away, his movements decelerate, he comes to rest.⁵¹

Lichtwark's was no longer a vision for a temple of art with a corresponding public function in the life of the nation, but a retreat from the hassles of urban life into a safe interior, much like a home. In the early nineteenth century the idea of the museum as a temple was based on the expectation that gallery-going was able to promote better citizenship.⁵² Around 1900 this concept had lost its force.

Konrad Lange at Stuttgart

There was one person in the audience at Mannheim who two years later went a step further than Lichtwark in linking the home and the gallery.⁵³ Konrad Lange, an art history professor at Tübingen, was also in charge of cataloguing and arranging the picture gallery in Stuttgart, and it was presumably in this capacity that he attended the Mannheim conference in 1903. In 1905 he commissioned an entire interior design as the setting for contemporary art in the Stuttgart gallery (pl. 29). That year he had seen and admired Bernhard Pankok's design in an arts and crafts exhibition in Dresden and immediately asked him to adapt it for Stuttgart.⁵⁴ The result was a room with discreetly patterned wallpaper of a light grey-brown and gently curved wood panels that were decorated here and there with finely crafted brass ornaments. In the corners were fitted cabinets for small pieces of sculpture, and in the middle of the rooms the two large radiators were hidden by two extraordinary assemblages, one a sofa, the other consisting of writing desks. They were fitted with small shelves intended to hold art books and journals. Lange clearly thought that a fashionable interior was the best setting for the growing collection of contemporary German artists and, when the room was opened to the public in 1907, placed a diverse group of artists on the walls, including Feuerbach, Stuck, Uhde and Keller. The room was reviewed at length in the professional journal *Museumskunde* by a colleague from the arts and crafts museum in Stuttgart. He ended by stating that all the modern rooms in the museum were in future to be fitted out by one of the renowned local interior designers.⁵⁵ This, however, was not to be. In fact, such a thorough-going experiment in the integration of art and contemporary interior design was, as we have already seen in relation to Bode, not the intention of most museum directors. Nor was it financially feasible in most cases.⁵⁶ For Lange, as for his colleagues in Berlin and Hamburg, it was less a matter of showing art in an authentic interior setting than of making an emotional impact. For this reason, he too gave primary attention to the texture and colour of the walls.



29 Konrad Lange, display of work by Anselm Feuerbach, Franz von Stuck, Fritz von Uhde and others in an interior by Bernhard Pankok in the Königlichen Gemäldegalerie in Stuttgart. From *Museumskunde*, vol. 3 (1907), p. 62.

In 1903 Lange had already redecorated the rooms of the older collection in the Königliche Gemäldegalerie in Stuttgart. Drawing on this experience, he declared in an article in the popular art journal *Die Kunst für Alle* that cloth on the walls was far preferable to painted surfaces. The texture had the capacity to reflect light in a variegated way, thus making the artwork appear more interesting and lively. One should, however, avoid patterns, he stated, because they could prove distracting. Yet to shy away from colourful contrasts would be a mistake.⁵⁷ Most old works, according to Lange, were conceived for polychromatic settings and hence required intense colours as background. Although he chose white and silvery grey for the walls of a number of rooms in Stuttgart – finding that they particularly suited Gainsborough – he did so largely to increase the level of light in otherwise dark rooms. He was convinced that walls in white and grey led to a loss of vibrancy in the appearance of most other works.⁵⁸ Change in order to avoid fatigue was certainly necessary, but Lange felt that with regard to wall colour there were two opposing views – and each held by artists of distinction. One view was concerned with retaining the distinctiveness of each individual work displayed, and so favoured a background colour that contrasted with the painting's dominant tones: 'for early German and Italian pictures, for example, which are dominated by blue, red and yellow (or gold), this would be the colour green, but a green which is, of course, subdued, shading into a bluish or greyish green'.⁵⁹ The other view favoured displays in which pictures were brought together into decorative ensembles. In this case the colour of the wall should pick up the dominant tone of the pictures: 'following this, Dutch paintings, for example, in which grey and green tones prevail, will appear best on a greyish green background'.⁶⁰ Lange followed both principles in the display of different schools, and chose a bluish green for early German works, and greyish green for Dutch paintings. The work of modern artists placed him in a dilemma, however, because he could not detect a common prevailing colour and saw each such work in the collection as having its own particular colour scheme. The installation in 1907 of Pankok's interior design, which was both striking yet relatively colour-neutral, was Lange's answer to the dilemma.

Like Bode, Tschudi and Lichtwark, colour was important for Lange in his installation of art at Stuttgart because he was striving for a direct emotional impact. For example, he believed that red evoked excitement, that blue had a calming effect, that grey produced a sensation of cold, and that gold created a sumptuous feeling.⁶¹ In contrast to Tschudi, however, who emphasised the capacity of colour to evoke associations with nature, and as compared to Lichtwark, who cherished their regional significance, Lange valued colours for their cultural connotations. We immediately associate, he wrote, black with darkness and hence with death and bereavement, red with heat and hence with love and passion, and so on.⁶² While there had been a consensus about the best background colour for pictures in the nineteenth century, there was no such agreement among German art gallery directors *circa* 1900, or about the reasons for their respective choices. Starting from the common concern for intimacy and immediacy of impact in the art gallery, each developed a distinctive mode of display. It is, of course, a moot question to ask which of the theories translated best into actual spectator experience. The sheer fact that each gallery director developed his own set of rules and explanations is sufficient, I think, to remind us that the

empirical effects of displays are virtually impossible to prove. Yet the concerted effort to create new and intimate gallery interiors points to a striking and more general shift in values around 1900 that will be explored later in the chapter.

Ludwig Justi at Frankfurt and Berlin

It was Ludwig Justi who, besides Bode in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, was able to realise the new common concern most fully in an entire redecoration programme. Not once, but twice before the First World War – first in 1905 in the Städelschen Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, and then in the Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 1914. And he too developed a highly idiosyncratic approach.

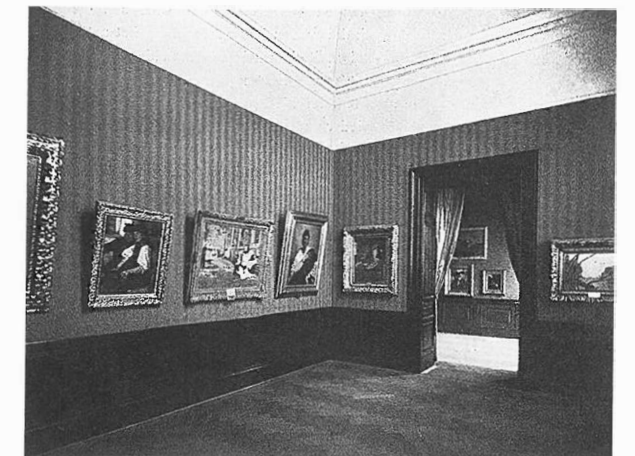
Justi, who, like Tschudi, had been an assistant to Bode at the Alte Museum in Berlin, embarked on a refurbishment of the art gallery in Frankfurt immediately after assuming the directorial post in 1904. His aim was to replace the monotone institutional character of the museum with a series of rooms of different colour and precisely adjusted to the exhibits. He created new space by opening up unused parts of the building in a wing on the upper floor, and he tried to make the larger ones more intimate by covering the doorways between rooms with drapery.⁶³ Justi noted that rooms at the end of the building with only a single door proved particularly successful since they invited the visitor to linger.⁶⁴ He also lowered the height of the gallery interior visually by painting the ceiling and a good part of the walls white. This had the effect of increasing the light levels in the rooms. The wood panels underneath the pictures were painted in a dark colour and, in places, reduced in height so that pictures could be hung much lower than hitherto. Justi even thought it necessary to reduce the size of the sofas placed at intervals throughout the gallery in order to achieve a more intimate atmosphere. This intention is particularly evident in three of the newly created rooms on the upper floor, where he displayed watercolours by the early nineteenth-century Frankfurt artist Edward von Steinle on light blue-striped material. Antique chairs, donated to the gallery, complemented the drawing-room appearance of the ensemble (pl. 30). Justi was particularly pleased by the small cabinet size of these rooms, which he thought created a much more congenial atmosphere for the works than when hung amongst large oil paintings. For their arrangement on the wall he adopted what he called the 'Vienna Secession principle' of adjusting the single-row display on the bottom line. According to Justi, 'an exhibition wall appears calm only if the pictures are aligned either at the top or bottom of their frames (except if there is a different group arrangement or a panel which introduces restfulness)'.⁶⁵

Like his colleagues, Justi kept artists from the same country and period together. But in a report in the journal *Museumskunde*, he thought it necessary to defend this practice. It was done, he wrote, not for traditional art historical reasons, but because the dissimilar chromatic character of works from different periods and regions would be destroyed were they to be placed next to each other.⁶⁶ Clearly, arrangement by schools was no longer a tacitly accepted norm. But even more troubling for Justi and his colleagues was the question of the background colour for the pictures. What colour did each group displayed

require in order to enhance rather than destroy their chromatic character? For the rooms of contemporary art showing Feuerbach, Leibl and Liebermann, Justi chose, in contrast to Lange's beige tone and Tschudi's two-tone wallpaper, a golden yellow-striped material (pl. 31). This colour, he argued, suited only the brighter, less subdued character of modern works. The more sombre older works required a darker and duller tone. Rembrandt and other Dutch artists therefore were shown on a green, roughly textured cloth that Justi thought provided sufficient structure and depth for the works. Pride of place in Justi's new arrangement was given to his favourite recent acquisition, Rembrandt's *The Blinding of Samson*, which he hung exceptionally low, surrounded by smaller Dutch works (pl. 32). Justi was no advocate of neutral colours and, like Lange, thought white or grey produced a deadening effect.⁶⁷ He also shared Lange's view that coloured walls would provide the best results where a dominant chromatic mood could be identified amongst the works shown. This could then be enhanced, as Justi did, with golden yellow in the rooms for modern art in the Städel, or be brought into closer unity by analogical colours, as he clearly tried to do with the green in the rooms for Dutch art. Yet the actual hue chosen remained a subjective decision and hence differed in each of the museums refurbished around 1900.

What is most striking in Justi's displays, however, is the way he hung the collection: extremely low, and thus intimately by the standards of the time, in a single row with the bottom of the pictures aligned. Moreover, following Bode's practice in Berlin, he also reframed where he could, abandoning the standard use of gold in favour of historical models.⁶⁸ This meant, for example, that all Dutch works in the collection in Frankfurt received a simple black frame. Yet Justi rejected any attempt to simulate a contemporary or historical domestic interior in the museum, despite his efforts to create an intimate atmosphere. 'The essence of a masterwork of painting or sculpture is the spirit', he declared, 'and when one adds furniture and pottery of the time in order to draw out formal parallels, one only detracts from this.'⁶⁹ Justi clearly had in mind Bode's arrangement at the recently opened Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum. But he did not think that galleries ought to be spartan. On the contrary, Justi favoured a richness of decor that some of his colleagues, as we will see, came to think of as inappropriate in an art gallery. Like them, he believed that the overriding consideration for the arrangement of galleries was the pleasing aesthetic impact of the arrangement on the spectator. But Justi's understanding of what this entailed – and how different his conception was from that of Bode, Tschudi and others – became most apparent when he was placed in the position to redecorate the Nationalgalerie in Berlin from 1912 to 1914.

Tschudi was forced to resign from the directorship of the Nationalgalerie in 1909 and was succeeded by Justi, who proved extremely skilful in accommodating the Kaiser's demands without betraying his own modernist proclivities. One of his first moves was to rid himself of the Landeskunstkommission (State Art Commission) that had hitherto advised on acquisitions, replacing it with a more congenial committee. He also relegated the specially commissioned Prussian history and battle scenes to a separate building.⁷⁰ His next task was to redecorate and rearrange the Nationalgalerie. A major rebuilding programme was begun that concentrated on the ground floor, whose sculpture hall had long



30 (top left) Ludwig Justi, display of work by Edward von Steinle in the mezzanine of the Städelches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, 1905. From *Museumskunde*, vol. 1 (1905), p. 207.

31 (top right) Ludwig Justi, display of work by Anselm Feuerbach, Wilhelm Leibl, Max Liebermann and others in the Städelches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, 1905. From *Museumskunde*, vol. 1 (1905), p. 210.

32 (left) Ludwig Justi, display of work by Dutch sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists in the Städelches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, 1905. From *Museumskunde*, vol. 1 (1905), p. 214.

been thought to be useless. Together with the architect Wilhelm Wille, Justi inserted a system of plaster walls into the sculpture hall that created a series of smaller rooms along the west side of the building and a dark inaccessible corridor between this and the gallery rooms in the eastern part. In order to avoid a common problem of side-lit gallery rooms – dark corners at the opposite wall to the windows – all ground-floor cabinets received oblique edges. At the apse-like space at the back of the gallery, Justi lifted the floor and lowered the ceiling for a more intimate effect. Most dramatic, however, was Justi's decoration programme. The west side was kept in dark red patterned cloth and the floor received black and red marble tiles. As in Frankfurt, the wood panels were dark and the cream-coloured ceiling showed a diamond pattern that was optically lowered by a frieze running above the doors. Along the frieze and door frames ran golden bands of neo-classical design. In this part of the museum, Justi placed the German artists Böcklin,

Feuerbach and Marées (pl. 33). In the apse rooms he hung Adolf von Menzel's work on green ornamentally woven material between a gold-patterned frieze and dark panelling (pl. 34). The last sequence of rooms on the east side, however, retained a subtle shade of light grey. The decor was reminiscent of the pale colours and geometric patterns of some of the Viennese Arts and Crafts designs, and formed the background for work by contemporary German Secessionist artists such as Leibl, Trübner and Liebermann (pl. 4).⁷¹ Liebermann himself had given the studio atop his house grey walls tastefully framed by thin blue lines (pl. 35).⁷² Similarly, the newly opened Cassirer gallery in Berlin – specialising in works by the Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists and their German disciples – had opened in rooms with walls that were described as 'neutral' in the press, a term used mostly for shades of grey at the turn of the century.⁷³ Although Justi himself was not keen on grey as a wall colour,⁷⁴ he was clearly guided in this part of the building by some of the artists' own tastes. In particular, he might have feared Max Liebermann's sharp tongue. Liebermann had risen to power in the Berlin art world and was generally not inclined to support Tschudi's successor.⁷⁵

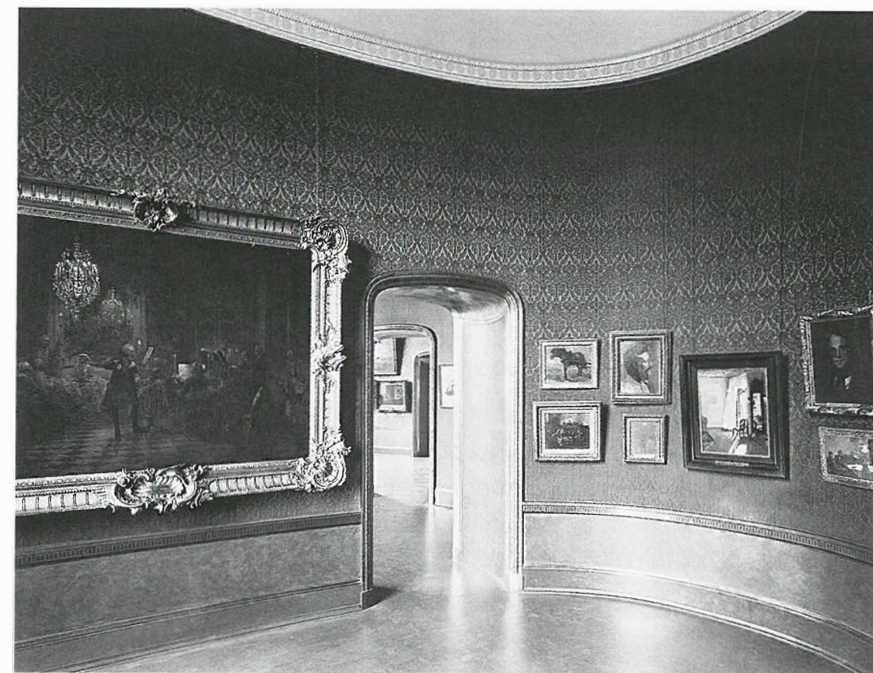
Apart from the Secession rooms, Justi had chosen surprisingly conventional wall colours for the refurbishment of the Nationalgalerie. Yet he was adventurous in the architecture of the rooms and their ornaments. This has become stunningly clear in the restoration that was completed in December 2001 and which largely recovered Justi's ground-floor design.⁷⁶ Justi took the official remit of the Nationalgalerie much more seriously than Tschudi had and sought to make this obvious in the installation. By evoking in colours the representational character of nineteenth-century art museums and by adding glamour and richness to the decor, he clearly hoped to lend a suitably celebratory tone to works selected to demonstrate the German national spirit.⁷⁷ Where Tschudi had tried to create a modern international art gallery, his successor once again saw it as his task to represent the German soul as expressed in art. Justi, however, did not understand this national soul as a moral and patriotic celebration in the manner of the Kaiser, but rather as an empathetic projection of Germany's innermost character in colour and form.⁷⁸ Hence he tried to retain the intimacy of his displays in Frankfurt by creating small and tasteful gallery rooms with low ceilings and a low picture hang. But with the richness and sumptuousness of the decor in the Nationalgalerie he hoped to signal the highly precious quality of this spirit.⁷⁹

No such spiritual unity, however, prevailed in the contemporary German art world. As soon as the Nationalgalerie reopened in 1914, Justi's refurbishment received praise and condemnation in equal measure.⁸⁰ The splendour pleased many reviewers, but it also incurred the wrath of those who had divergent aesthetic beliefs. Most prominent among Justi's critics were Adolf Behne and Karl Scheffler. Behne wrote in *Die Gegenwart* that this was how a member of the *nouveaux riches* might decorate his picture gallery.⁸¹ Karl Scheffler agreed: the rooms had been given a disgusting pseudo-historical salon character. Pictures, according to Scheffler, looked best in the artists' own studios, and even Böcklin's had simple, chalked walls.⁸² For good measure, Scheffler reminded his readers of Tschudi's beautiful Impressionist room, and declared that in comparison Justi was no more than a bureaucrat, lacking in artistic feeling.⁸³ As these comments make clear, Justi's critics were



33 Ludwig Justi, display of work by Hans von Marées, 1914.

34 Ludwig Justi, display of work by Adolph von Menzel, 1914.





35 Max Liebermann, *The Artist's Studio*, 1902, oil on canvas, 68.5 × 82 cm. Kunstmuseum St Gallen.

by no means opponents of the new and more intimate gallery rooms that emerged around 1900. On the contrary, Scheffler in particular was an early champion of the immediacy of colour and a return towards more emotionally evocative interiors. Each, however, had a different understanding of it. It was in order to achieve clarity and authority in these discussions that gallery directors turned to contemporary psychological discussions for guidance. Yet here, too, confusion reigned.

Pragmatic Colour: Hermann von Helmholtz

Goethe's *Theory of Colours* had laid the foundation for the discussion of colour in the nineteenth century. By the end of the century, however, this had been replaced by a range of new research into colour perception that made Goethe's metaphysical assumptions seem dubious. While Goethe's discussion of subjective responses to colour vision had been exceptionally influential, his theory of colour harmonies as an expression of unity between the subject and the world had come to seem untenable. The idealist and speculative aspects of the ideas of Goethe and his contemporaries were suspect to the generation of eminent physicists and physiologists, such as Hermann von Helmholtz and Ernst Brücke, who as young adults had experienced the failed revolution of 1848. Instead, they set out to fashion what Timothy Lenoir has called a discourse of pragmatic realism.⁸⁴

In 1868, shortly after Helmholtz had finished the last volume of his exhaustive *Treatise on Physiological Optics*, he gave a public lecture in Frankfurt and Heidelberg in which he summarised and modified some of his results.⁸⁵ After enumerating a number of faults in the eye as a piece of optical equipment (for instance, colour dispersions, irregularities of the corneal curvature and the lens's opacity), he resoundingly declared:

If an optician would try to sell me an instrument with these faults . . . I would believe myself to be perfectly justified in using the harshest expressions regarding his negligence in craft, and in protest return the instrument.⁸⁶

Helmholtz's whole purpose in his work on optics was to show how under these less than ideal circumstances we nevertheless succeed through trial and error in gaining a pragmatically effective picture of the world. In his popular lectures, Helmholtz repeatedly impressed on his listeners and readers that our sensations are no more than

symbols for the objects of the external world and correspond to the latter in as much as writing or verbal expressions correspond to the things they signify. They inform us about the characteristics of the external world, but in no better way than we can inform a blind person through words about colours.⁸⁷

Or: 'Everything our eye sees is nothing but an aggregate of coloured patches.'⁸⁸ For Helmholtz it is our unconscious mental judgement that guarantees that we achieve a coherent and useful image of the world – one, moreover, on which we can all agree. Although Helmholtz studied the physiological aspects of vision, he emphasised the psychological contribution made by the mind to the perceptual process far more than any previous writer. For him the role of art was similar to that of science: to study these contributions and communicate them in an efficient manner in the work.⁸⁹

Colour on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown in France

It is interesting to trace the impact of Helmholtz's work in France as well as in Germany, for this brings out a significant difference in the two cultures that the privileging of France in accounts of the emergence of modernism and modernity has obscured.

Helmholtz's writings were widely circulated in France in the 1870s and 1880s.⁹⁰ Most important for artists was his lecture on optics in art that appeared as an appendix to the translation of Brücke's textbook in 1878.⁹¹ By the late 1880s Seurat was clearly aware of Helmholtz's modification of the traditional triads of primary and secondary colours (red, blue and yellow; green, orange and violet, were replaced by Helmholtz with red, violet and green; greenish blue, yellow and magenta).⁹² The scientists' overwhelming interest in the use of colour as a way to simulate the contrast and intensity of effects produced in ordinary vision was quite congenial to Signac's and Seurat's artistic enterprises. Around this time, however, a competing discussion of colour influenced both artists and resulted in an ambiguity that still divides discussion of Neo-Impressionist art, some seeing their work as a realistic project and others emphasising its constructive nature. This was Charles Henry's psychology of form and colour, first presented in his *Introduction à une esthétique scientifique* of 1885, and expanded in his *Cercle chromatique* in 1888.⁹³ Henry was not interested in colour as a means of producing a convincing illusion of how we perceive the world, but as a visual stimulus that makes a direct and unmediated impact on our emotional states. He believed that he had discovered the rules by which such emotional stimulation operated and that they were extremely simple: essentially, a move from darker to lighter colours was pleasing – white stood for absolute purity in his scheme – and ascending lines produced more happiness than descending ones.⁹⁴

It was Henry who encouraged Charles Féré to undertake research into colour stimulation and muscular response.⁹⁵ He embarked on what would become the first experiments on the bodily impact of colour. Féré found that red light was most stimulating and violet most calming.⁹⁶ According to Féré, however, this was not a result of visual perception as such, but a product of the variable vibrations of radiant energy on the body as a whole. However slight the results of such investigations (they went, in fact, little beyond Goethe's division between warm and cold colours), they clearly appealed to Signac and Seurat, as well as to the Belgian artist, interior designer and architect Henry van de Velde. Committed as they were to anarchist politics, all three welcomed what seemed to be a universally effective set of techniques for stimulating a sense of harmony in the viewer in preparation for the coming revolutionary social order.⁹⁷ The Neo-Impressionists, however, favoured more neutral settings for their work, but as we know from Martha Ward's research, Pissarro, Degas and Cassatt were experimenting at this time with coloured frames and exhibition rooms conceived in complementary contrasts to the colour of their paintings.⁹⁸

Behind this search for harmony there lay another concern as well: the spectre of neurasthenia, a vaguely characterised nervous disease that was largely held to afflict professional people.⁹⁹ Although ill defined, it was generally understood to be an ailment of modern life that manifested itself through over-taxed nerves leading to a weakening of will-power. Joris-Karl Huysmans in his novel *A rebours* of 1883 famously described such a state in relation to his highly refined aristocratic protagonist, Des Esseintes. Huysmans satirised the cravings of his enfeebled characters for ever stronger colour impressions: 'Their eyes almost invariably hanker after that most irritating and morbid of colours, with its artificial splendors and feverish acrid gleams – orange.'¹⁰⁰ Colour in France had become an issue of ele-

mentary feelings, an expression of fundamental affects, far removed from Helmholtz's concern with colour as a stimulant for the natural physiology of the eye.

Colour as Stimulus in Germany

In Germany, too, Helmholtz's account of colour was soon followed by a somatic conception – a concern for the effects on the affective state of the perceiving subject. Yet there was far less anxiety about the pathological consequences of sensual colour experience than in France. Helmholtz noted that prolonged and intensive stimulation of a single nerve receptor produces fatigue, but he was adamant that it was only natural for the body to desire many and manifold forms of stimulation, linking this to an increase in the individual's capacity for effective action.¹⁰¹ At the turn of the century the leading museum directors in Germany were more than willing to provide such a rich and varied setting. Overly intense and uniform impressions were not disdained because of their effect on over-wrought nerves, but because they represented an impediment to deeper and more valuable perceptions. When Germany's leading experimental psychologist at the end of the nineteenth century, Wilhelm Wundt, published his discussion of the emotional sensations produced by colour perceptions in the first volume of the fourth edition of his *Principles of Physiological Psychology* in 1893, he declared that fatigue, the result of a continual uniform stimulus, led to indifference and emotional saturation. Contrasting impressions had the advantage of heightening sensation:

hence the so much fresher feeling of pleasure which the convalescent receives in his normal everyday sensations, in comparison to the continuously healthy person who only becomes aware of the pleasure of life through a series of small events of pain.¹⁰²

Drawing on such discussions, gallery directors aimed to eliminate what they perceived to be the sameness of displays in nineteenth-century museums. More exposure to diverse stimulation, not less, was their antidote to fatigue. This, as well as the emotional impact of colour, was a concern they shared with psychologists. But when it came to the specific colour choices, the psychological treatises proved less helpful to museum people.

Perhaps it was in order to gain authority and rise above criticism that Ludwig Justi, for example, turned to Wilhelm Wundt's *Principles of Physiological Psychology*.¹⁰³ If so, it was in vain. Around 1900 Hans Dedekam, a curator at the Arts and Crafts museum in Christiania, Denmark, started a tour of (mainly German) museums in order to develop a picture of the best display strategies, as well as the principles upon which they were based. He published his results in the journal *Museumskunde* in 1905 and 1906, including an article on colour.¹⁰⁴ Dedekam's article provides a remarkably clear insight into the views of the time. He starts by saying that the question as to the colour and texture of display walls is one of the most difficult problems faced by museums, and he strongly rejects attempts to create period rooms.¹⁰⁵ Museum rooms, he continues, should be as simple as possible so as to throw into relief the quality of the objects displayed. At the same time, the rooms should afford a pleasing frame. In order to determine which colours might do

this best, Dedekam, too, draws on Wundt's *Principles of Physiological Psychology*. He states that yellow, orange and red have a cheering, refreshing effect, while blue and bluish green have a depressing one (thereby, in fact, modifying Wundt's own views somewhat).¹⁰⁶ From this Dedekam concluded that dark red – which had been traditional in museums for so long – was in fact the worst possible colour choice. Since red, an advancing colour, 'is of an obtrusive character, while blue is the reverse, it also seems natural to give preference to blue as a colour for backgrounds'.¹⁰⁷ But black and white must be used judiciously, he declared, since they can produce a dull or dazzling effect, respectively, and thus flatten the appearance of objects. If the aim is to bring objects into a unified whole, then wall colours may be determined by selecting a darker or brighter variant of the dominant colour in the paintings. Using a contrasting colour, however, makes the objects appear more distinctive.¹⁰⁸ The position that Dedekam develops represents almost exactly those principles upon which Konrad Lange had based his reorganisation of the Stuttgart picture gallery. Like Lange, Dedekam placed heavy emphasis on the enhancing effects of texture in the background of works. And he too called for variety: 'The eye becomes dulled by monotony, while a new impression has a rousing, refreshing effect.'¹⁰⁹ Most interesting, however, is Dedekam's conclusion that the choice of which colours to use as contrasting ones should be settled by current taste, following the cultural standards of the time, a view shared by Lange.

This was a weak conclusion given Dedekam's research into colour psychology. It was, however, quite a natural one given the fact that claims about colour combinations and their effects had become very controversial by then. Helmholtz based his account of the harmonic colour triad on his three-receptor theory, which put him at odds with the traditional schema of red, yellow and blue. There was also disagreement as to whether complementary colours produced a pleasurable effect or not. This claim had been asserted by Goethe and Chevreul, and was reiterated by Jonas Cohn, the first of Wundt's students to investigate sensory reactions to colour experimentally.¹¹⁰ But Helmholtz and the influential empathy theorist Theodor Lipps favoured less stark contrasts. Moreover, there were conflicting accounts of the feelings said to be evoked by colour sensations. For example, Wundt believed that red produced a feeling of conflict, while Lipps thought it pleasurable warm. It must be said that none of this was vindicated experimentally. When Cohn began his experiments they were immediately contradicted by researchers in Titchener's laboratory at Cornell University and in Kirschmann's Toronto laboratory.¹¹¹ Cohn tried to exclude all associational factors from his experiments and came to the conclusion that people preferred more saturated colours. Although colour preferences depended on individual tastes, he noted a common dislike for yellow. David Major at Cornell and Emma Baker and Susie Chown in Toronto refuted this with their assertion that yellow was strongly favoured.¹¹²

Lange and Dedekam concluded that only a culturally relative approach to colour could be sustained. In his article, Lange stated that one of the few facts that experimental colour psychology had firmly established was that a change in colour impressions produced pleasure;¹¹³ but otherwise he challenged the representativeness of Wundt's (and his students') experimental data.¹¹⁴ He pointed out that the relatively small number of subjects tested

(between eight and twelve) were usually of the same age, most often male, belonged to the same class, shared the same education and were already familiar with the aesthetic problems that were the subjects of the experiments. Lange's objective was to broaden the audience for art and for this reason he also rejected traditional normative aesthetics. For Lange, the results from Wundt's laboratory came far too close to establishing a rigid new set of laws to replace the old rules of classicism, now happily abandoned.¹¹⁵ For him as for the other museum directors who consulted the psychological literature on colour, the research did no more than reinforce a common concern: that uniformity of colour throughout the museum produced fatigue in the viewer and that colours in general had the tendency to animate both body and soul.

Conflicting Views

The common interest in the immediacy of perception, however, only hid a basic difference that emerged around 1900 among psychologists as well as among museum people: on the one hand were those who believed that only a small elite had the capacity for aesthetic sensibility, while on the other were those who championed aesthetic reform from below by means of mass education. While Wundt had restricted his experimental exploration of colours to the most elementary sensations and emotions, a great number of his students hoped to go beyond this and take account of the complex feelings and thoughts at stake in aesthetic experiments. Yet there was no agreement about the means and purpose of this research. Some, like Oskar Külpe, advocated an experimentally controlled form of introspection that would, by its very nature, be limited to highly educated and articulate people. Others, like Ernst Meumann, were committed to the study of children in schools and agitated for a reform of art education.¹¹⁶ A similar fissure emerged among museum directors and critics after 1900. On the one hand were people like Lichtwark and Lange who hoped to extend the museum's public, and on the other were those, like Tschudi and Scheffler, who became increasingly interested in making art exhibitions a rarefied experience.

It was precisely this difference that was at stake in the controversy over Justi's refurbishment of the Nationalgalerie in 1914. Although Scheffler unfavourably compared Justi's gallery decor with Tschudi's Impressionist room of 1897, his memory had served him badly. He had quite clearly forgotten how rich and sumptuous Tschudi's decoration had been. When Justi later restored Tschudi's room, Scheffler, unaware that this was Tschudi's installation, saw nothing but a further sign of Justi's tastelessness.¹¹⁷ But by then not only had Scheffler's taste changed but Tschudi's too. As the discussion of colour in terms of its immediate emotional and associative qualities was becoming increasingly prevalent at the turn of the century – for example, it was in these terms that the popular journal *Kunstwart* discussed art¹¹⁸ – some people, including Tschudi and Scheffler, were already moving away from it. While in his 'Notes on Colour' of 1901 Scheffler still spoke positively of colour moods, in 1904 he rejected the highly colourful interiors of the designer Otto Eckmann on grounds of their feminine, emotional qualities.¹¹⁹ Scheffler by now was clearly under the aesthetic sway of the Berlin Secession exhibitions that had opened in 1898. Their decor

was in stark contrast to the rich textures and strong colours at the Munich Secession and the Nationalgalerie. According to the critic Hans Rosenberg, a close friend of the Secession's leader, Max Liebermann, 'the walls are covered with rough hessian, which in the first room for sculptures is matt blue, in two further rooms matt green, and a fourth is painted red. A fifth room is left unpainted.'¹²⁰ Hessian was probably used here for the first time. In subsequent years it occasionally appeared as a background – for example, in early exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It became a common wall cover, however, in galleries after the 1950s, going out of fashion in the 1980s. At the Secession exhibition it was presumably chosen in order to refrain from a luxurious appearance and to avoid undesirable mass appeal. The popular success of the Munich Secession had made the opposite strategy necessary: instead of sumptuous interiors, the Berlin movement chose spare settings for their work so as to target those few true connoisseurs not only willing but also able to purchase work.¹²¹ According to Tschudi, most people lacked the capacity to appreciate 'the inner life of form . . . and the harmony of colours'.¹²² Instead, they were easily dazzled by ostentatious wealth and decoration. So, when Tschudi moved to Munich as director of the Alte Pinakothek in 1909, he did not recreate the rich effect of his Impressionist room: Flemish seventeenth-century artists and Italians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were hung on simple and unadventurously traditional red and green backgrounds.¹²³ According to Scheffler, sumptuously decorated interiors produced a sense of subordination, thereby evoking the abhorrent idea of social democracy. Pictures like Liebermann's were delimited, self-contained worlds, and so required a less popular, more reticent environment.¹²⁴

At the conference in Mannheim in 1903, where museum reformers met and Lichtwark outlined his vision for the domestication of the museum, the director of the art gallery in Bremen summarised the opposing views: there were those who saw the walls as providing a neutral background (in grey or beige) to offset the works on display, and those (to whom he himself belonged) who favoured a decorative and festive environment. Strong colours, he believed, together with costly materials, served this purpose well.¹²⁵ What distinguished the museum reformers at this conference from their colleagues was their common interest in reaching audiences beyond the traditional constituency of museums, namely the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or educated middle class. What was at stake during these years of economic recession and the rise of socialism was made clear in the opening speech given by the mayor of Mannheim:

In the battle over the conservation or destruction of today's social order, a battle that has raged between two fiercely opposed world views in recent decades, the perspective of appearances is the only firm standpoint. The awakening ethical consciousness in today's society regarding the need for protection of the weak against the might of property – which has taken the place of former privileges – is fighting for a place in the sun within today's social order and even for those who think they have nothing to lose by its overthrow.¹²⁶

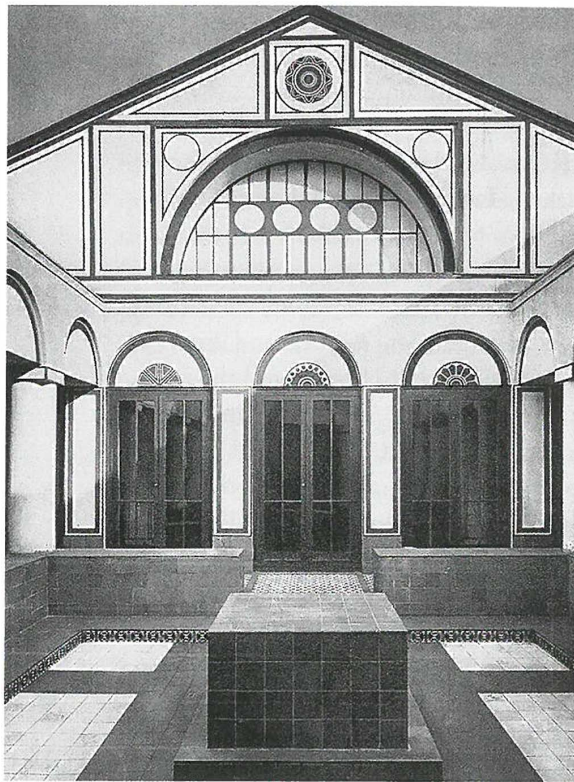
What is noticeable in the writings of some of those who were interested in expanding the audience for art is that they were generally far more sympathetic to the associational qualities of colour perception than their more elitist counterparts. But just as vehemently

as Lichtwark, Lange and Justi called for rooms of strong colours and moods,¹²⁷ Tschudi, Scheffler and their friend, the critic Julius Meier-Graefe, opposed such interiors. In an article in *Dekorative Kunst*, Meier-Graefe criticised Eckmann and van de Velde (whom he had commissioned two years earlier with designing a gallery in Paris) for producing interiors that were projections of their own personalities.¹²⁸ He decried those tendencies in interior design by which ornament was used to produce empathetic feelings. Instead, he now championed the simplicity and functionality of Walter Heymel's house in Munich, a truly aristocratic space in which 'cool self-assurance' led to a total disregard for ornamentation. This space was successful, according to Meier-Graefe, because it had been designed by a close friend and collaborator of the owner, Rudolf Schröder. Schröder, a poet and interior designer, co-founded the literary journal *Die Insel* with the publisher Heymel and the poet-critic Otto Bierbaum. While the ornamentation of the house was kept to a minimum, colour played an important role – not for the moods it created, but because it allowed a finely nuanced setting. Meier-Graefe concluded: 'The movement will in all likelihood follow Schröder's sure-footed path; the masses won't of course. The mass of people will always be more impressed by the worst richly decorated object than the best unornamented one.'¹²⁹

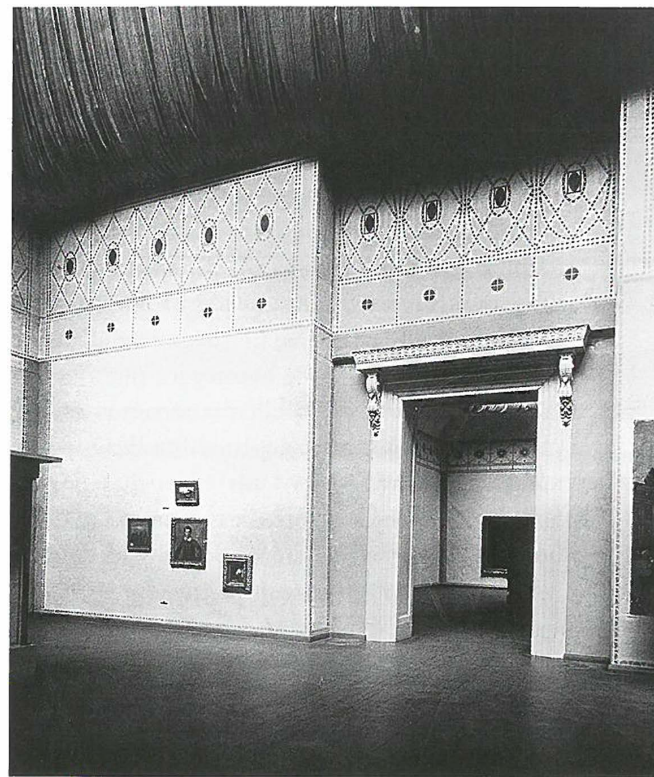
Common Ground? Peter Behrens and the *Centenary Exhibition of German Art*

In 1906, for a brief moment, the museum people and critics who championed reform from below and those who saw it as restricted to an aesthetic elite were reconciled in an exhibition at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin.¹³⁰ The *Centenary Exhibition of German Art* (*Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst*) was extremely significant for other reasons that are here worth noting, if only in passing. It redefined the history of German art: Caspar David Friedrich and the Romantics first entered the canon through this exhibition. It was also the first time that pictures were shown in a museum in an all-white environment – although this was not, as will become clear, what could be called a neutral setting (the subject of the next chapters). Central to the argument here, however, is the way in which the exhibition's design accommodated the two otherwise diametrically opposing views. It is a striking example of the way in which a single aesthetic practice can be expressive of two fundamentally different underlying beliefs.¹³¹ The *Centenary Exhibition of German Art* was the result of a collaboration between the unapologetic elitist Hugo von Tschudi and the populists, Alfred Lichtwark and Woldemar von Seidlitz from Dresden. Julius Meier-Graefe, who entered the fray only later, was an ally of Tschudi.¹³² Tschudi invited the architect Peter Behrens to provide the interior decoration for the show.

At the time, Behrens was director of the Kunstgewerbeschule in Düsseldorf. His work had been strongly supported by Karl Scheffler and he had designed acclaimed exhibitions in Dresden and Oldenburg (pl. 36).¹³³ Drawing on the work of the Vienna Arts and Crafts movement, the Wiener Werkstätten, Behrens was working on developing a language of spatial relationships based on variations of cubic forms. In the interiors for the *Centenary Exhibition* he marked spatial relations by using thin dark lines or by placing stylised geo-



36 Peter Behrens, *Keramischer Hof* at the third Deutsche Kunstgewerbe exhibition, Dresden, 1906. From *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 10, no. 4 (January 1907), p. 142.



37 Peter Behrens, view into the Cornelius Rooms on the upper floor of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, during the dismantling of the *Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst*, 1906.

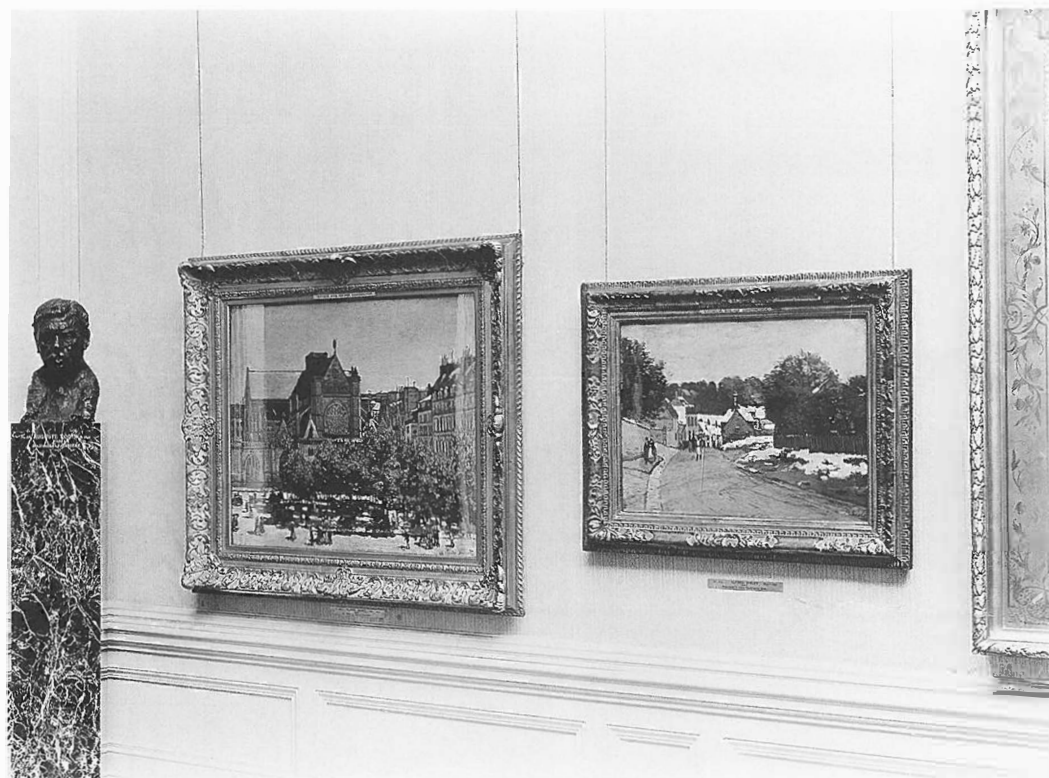
metric patterns on slightly off-white walls. Colour was confined to a few central locations, where it was allowed to develop its full chromatic life. What is interesting about Behrens's design is that it appealed to the two competing factions. It could be equally well understood in terms of psychological projections or as part of an aristocratic return to the values of an elitist neo-classicism. Black lines on a white background had long been identified as essentially space-creating rather than as having an independent chromatic impact. Wilhelm Niemeyer, employed by Behrens as a publicist at the Arts and Crafts school in Düsseldorf, included both elements in his interpretation of Behrens's designs. Niemeyer, who had attended lectures by Wundt and formed his views while studying under the empathy theorist and architectural historian August Schmarsow, celebrated Behrens's work as the reappearance of monumental art in the spirit of the Greeks but without the personal expressiveness characteristic of van de Velde and others. Niemeyer's text celebrated the cool intellectualism of Behrens's design, noting that this could be difficult for the wider public to understand, while also drawing on Schmarsow's version of empathy theory to argue that Behrens articulated the fundamental force of elementary form-feelings in space, something



38 Hugo von Tschudi, display of work by French Impressionists on the third floor of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1908.

accessible to all. According to Niemeyer, Behrens created a spatial feeling by articulating a spatial rhythm, and this evoked a full bodily experience on the part of the viewer. The room would be 'filled with sensual action' by virtue of an act of empathetic projection on the spectator's part.¹³⁴ Those, like Lichtwark, who desired a widely accessible national art praised the emotional directness of Behrens's design, while Tschudi and Meier-Graefe valued his refinement and Hellenic clarity.¹³⁵

The centenary show took up the whole of the museum. To make this possible, Behrens devised a system of wooden frames covered with off-white cloth and placed them in front of the walls. The upper edge of the structures was hidden behind a veil (a device also much used in exhibitions of the Vienna Secession) so as to lower the height of the rooms. A surviving photograph shows the decoration of the central room of the museum on the second floor, the Cornelius Rooms, during the dismantling of the exhibition (pl. 37).¹³⁶ Tschudi retained Behrens's design for the third floor (where foreign works, including the Impressionists, were hung) when the gallery reopened with its permanent collection on show in 1907 (pl. 38). As pictures of Tschudi's installations of 1907 reveal, the cloth that Behrens



39 Hugo von Tschudi, display of work by Auguste Rodin, Claude Monet and Alfred Sisley on the third floor of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1908.

used had a fine geometric pattern (pls 39 and 40), and he followed the Viennese designers Hoffmann and Moser in outlining the wall planes through the use of thin, dark ornamental lines (pl. 41).¹³⁷ The exhibition started on the third floor. In the lobby German portraits from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were shown alongside busts of Kant, Moses Mendelssohn, Goethe and others (pl. 42). This room was intended to provide a historical introduction to the exhibition, situating nineteenth-century art against the background of the spirit of the Enlightenment and Romanticism.¹³⁸ Behrens's frieze represents a stylised variation on the Biedermeier ornamentation of the early nineteenth century, celebrated at the time by those who were trying to revive what they took to be the true national spirit in the decorative arts.¹³⁹

For a brief moment in the history of exhibition installations, Behrens reconciled two conflicting views. For Tschudi, Meier-Graefe and Scheffler, artistic greatness was the result of a genius that transcended the limits of its own time by following ancient rules or by imitating historic examples. For Lichtwark, Lange and Justi, on the other hand, art was a product of bourgeois culture, shaped by local and national circumstances: art became great when it connected with the life of 'the most important class, the bourgeoisie', and spread

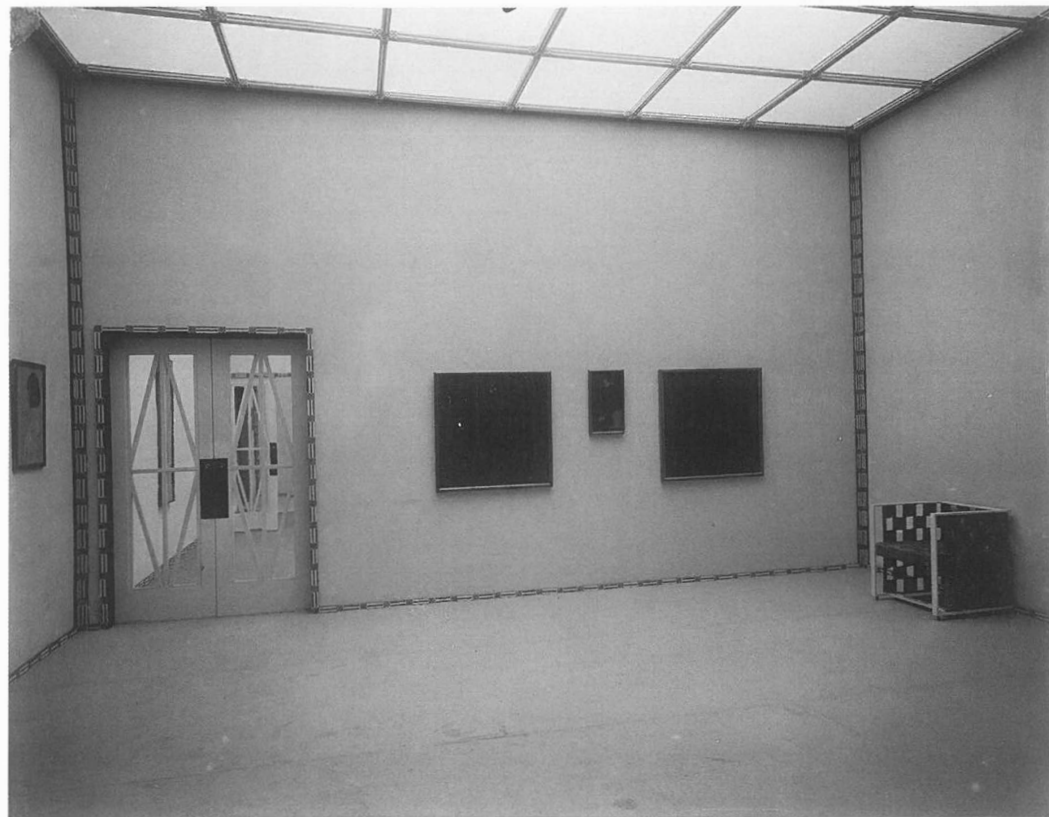


40 Hugo von Tschudi, display of work by Adolf Menzel in the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1908.

outwards from there.¹⁴⁰ Lichtwark appreciated the functionality and apparent simplicity of Behrens's design. Where Lichtwark saw Protestant Germanic virtues like straightforwardness, Meier-Graefe saw a new heroic art form in the spirit of the ancient Mediterranean civilisations. Both, the populist nationalists and the spiritual aristocrats, saw in Behrens's architecture the dawn of a new public art form that was representative of its age. But since they had fundamental disagreements as to the essential nature of the public, they ultimately diverged in the content of their evaluation, and the consensus between them was only brief.

Female Taste and Male Art Lovers

In the middle of the nineteenth century those who wanted to broaden the art museum's constituency presented it as a means of improving modes of behaviour. Fifty years later a different reason was more commonly given. Germany's rapid industrialisation had led to the emergence of a fast-growing consumer market.¹⁴¹ As in Britain, economic growth led to worries about the quality of the products. However, the German efforts to educate the



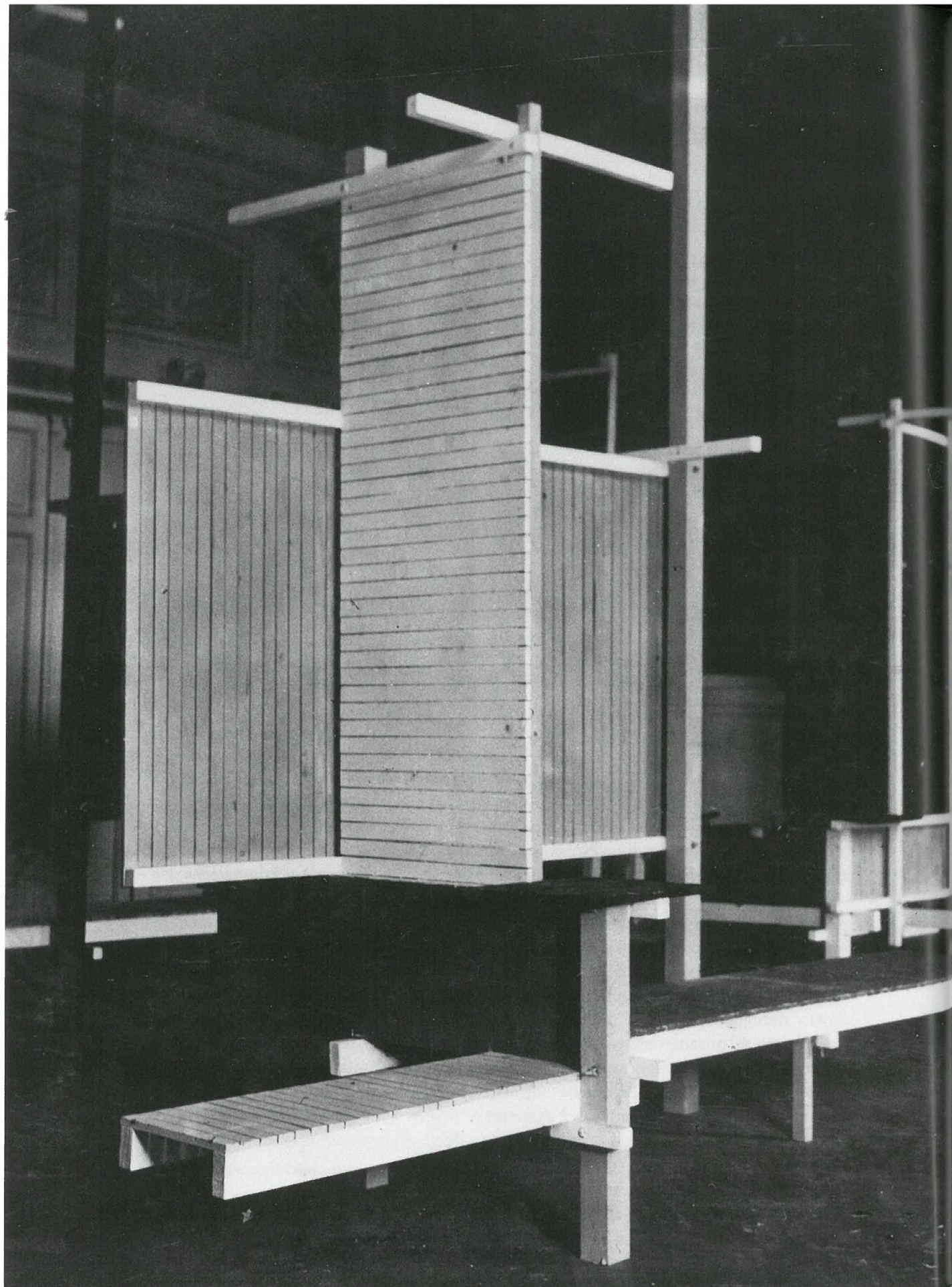
41 Koloman Moser, 18th Secession Exhibition in Vienna, 1903.

expanding middle classes by schooling their visual sensibilities aimed at creating more discriminating consumers rather than to train better artisans. Lichtwark, for his part, was explicit about this.¹⁴² The objective was to better the quality of German industrial products and to make the nation more competitive in international markets. Others, however, put little faith in consumers and instead appealed to the industrialists themselves.¹⁴³ Karl Scheffler, for example, thought that industrialists should develop an aristocratic attitude and take responsibility for the culture.¹⁴⁴ The debate had clear gender overtones. It was the 'desiring gaze of women', in Scheffler's words, that (to his dismay) sustained the market for low-quality consumer goods.¹⁴⁵ Others claimed that women were not only more avid shoppers but that they were also able to take in larger quantities of stimuli, were more sensitive to mood and atmosphere, and were above all more discriminating judges of the quality of products.¹⁴⁶ For this reason women were of great importance to Lichtwark and a number of other museum directors, and they set out to cultivate them as museum visitors.¹⁴⁷ Scheffler, Tschudi and Meier-Graefe, on the other hand, looked towards a closed world of like-minded male art lovers, as exemplified by Heymel and Schröder in Munich.



42 Peter Behrens, view of the entrance room on the third floor of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, with late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German paintings and sculptures, 1908.

Despite these differences, however, German museum directors and art critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were in agreement in trying to turn the grand exhibition halls of museums into intimate private spaces. This can be seen, for example, in the way that ceilings in art galleries were lowered, pictures displayed at eye level with gaps between them, and in the way that the decor of some rooms was influenced by fashionable interior design. The notion of experience embodied in these displays focused on interiority and intimacy of perception. For Justi, as for other museum directors who began their careers during the Wilhelmine era, the creation of an intimate interior continued to be the governing concern of the 1920s. Yet a powerful alternative came to be articulated at the time, one that emphasised exteriority and publicness, rather than inwardness and interiority.



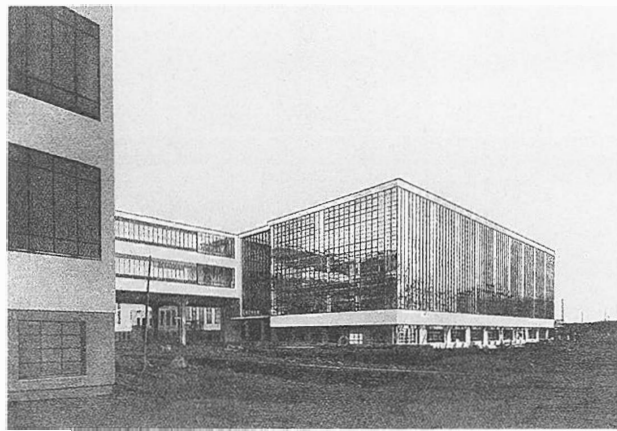
3

Exteriority and Exhibition Spaces in Weimar Germany

Just as exhibition rooms at the turn of the century were being planned as harmonious sanctuaries, a corresponding notion of experience and its place in modern life was being articulated by the sociologist Georg Simmel. His analyses of contemporary social phenomena turned upon the tension between the subjective inner life of private individuals and the public demands of social life. He emphasised the effects that the modern capitalist money economy had on the formation of social and individual behaviour. Because the money economy is based on exchange value, it is empty at its core and deprives people and things of their uniqueness and individuality. As a result, people are not driven by inner convictions but by an outer need to be acknowledged. This, according to Simmel, leads to a self-perpetuating cycle of consumption in which people oscillate between the desire to attain external markers of personality and the need for levelling signs of group membership. As he wrote in his famous article, 'The Problem of Style', in 1908, 'the practical existence of humanity is caught up in the fight between individuality and generality'.¹ Simmel discusses the significance of interior decoration for his age as a means for people to express the uniqueness of their own personality, which is otherwise undermined by the capitalist economy based on exchange value:

the individual composes out of manifold stylised objects an environment in accordance with its taste; in this way they [the objects] obtain a new centre which is not contained in any one of them . . . , a subjective unity, a now palpable quality of being experienced through a personal soul. . . .²

Among the many that were attracted to Simmel's famous lectures in Berlin around 1900 was the young Ludwig Justi.³ For Justi and his colleagues who would continue their career as museum directors after the First World War, the search for a stylised interior remained the guiding principle behind their museum installations. Indeed, the creation of colourful rooms intensified initially under the influence of German Expressionism. In psychological discussions, too, the tentative results of pre-war laboratory research on the emotional effects



43 Walter Gropius, Bauhaus Dessau, 1926. From *Die Bauzeitung*, vol. 24, no. 12 (26 March 1927), p. 90.

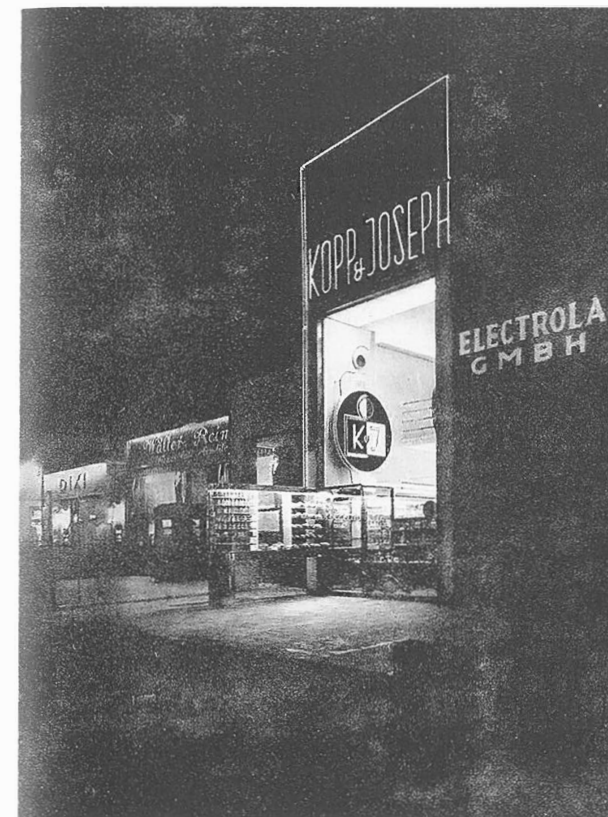
of colours hardened into unquestioned truths. In the late 1920s, however, a different vision came to be articulated that challenged the emphasis on interiority and emotional immediacy.

In 1926 one of the more perceptive critics of Weimar culture, Siegfried Kracauer, identified the characteristic feature of his time as the relentless quest for distraction. Its consequence was a culture of pure exteriority:

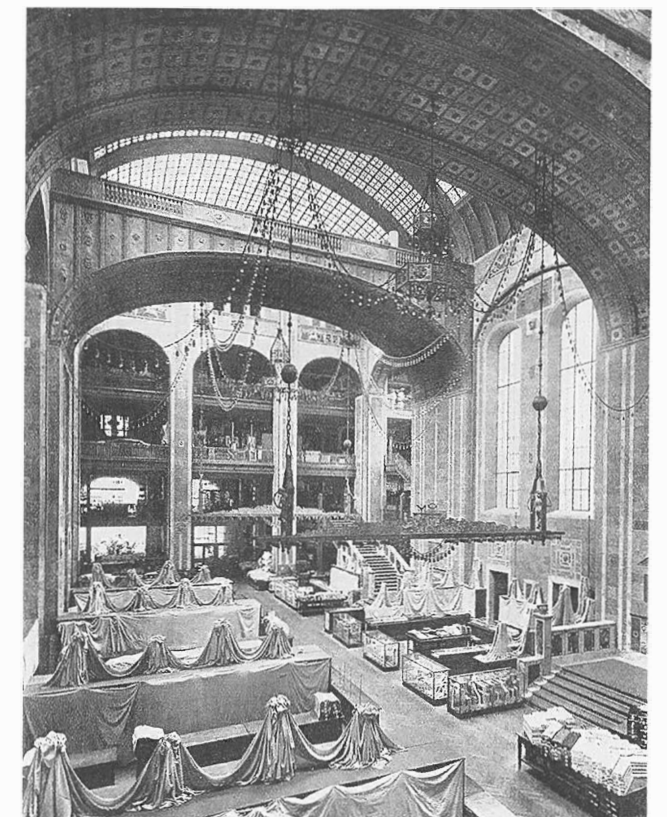
This emphasis on the external has the advantage of being *sincere*. It is not externality that poses a threat to truth. Truth is threatened only by the naïve affirmation of cultural values that have become unreal and by the careless misuse of concepts such as personality, inwardness, tragedy, and so on – terms that in themselves certainly refer to lofty ideas that have lost much of their scope along with their supporting foundations, due to social changes. Furthermore, many of these concepts have acquired a bad aftertaste today, because they unjustifiably deflect an inordinate amount of attention from the external damages of society onto the private individual.⁴

In taking this position Kracauer set himself against his teacher Simmel.⁵ In contrast to Simmel, Kracauer saw no possibility of a retreat to a meaningful form of interiority. The places he discussed were very much a part of the public realm: the streets of Berlin, the hotel lobby and the cinema. The idea of creative individuality as a counterbalance to public life gives way in Kracauer's writing, as it does in Walter Benjamin's, to a reading of public space. Of interest to both writers was the behaviour of people in the public realm and the patterns that they form collectively. Inwardness turned outwards and in so doing contributed to the cult of surface values in Weimar Germany.⁶

Just as the new architecture of the era displayed the inside outside – most famously through the curtain glass wall of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus buildings in Dessau of 1925–6 (pl. 43) – so some artists began to create room designs that rejected interiority in favour of an experience centring on the public aspects of life. Initially, as we will see, this new design was absorbed in the museum as no more than a new style of interior decoration,



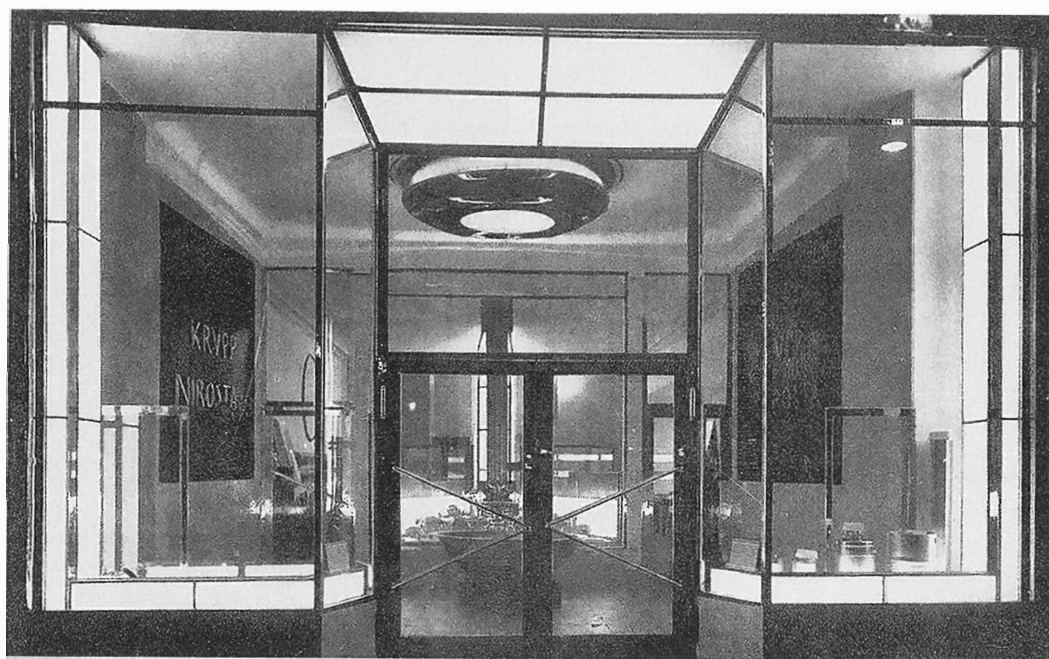
44 Arthur Korn und Weitzmann, Perfumerieladen Kopp und Joseph on the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin, circa 1929. From *Moderne Ladenbauten* (Berlin: Ernst Pollak, 1929).



45 Alfred Messel, interior of the department store A. Wertheim on Leipziger Strasse in Berlin, 1904. From Gustav Adolf Patz, *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1927), p. 232.

but by the second half of the 1920s there was a backlash against the cultivation of interiority that would eventually have long-lasting effects on the way art was exhibited. The critic Helmut Lethen has shown how a range of writers began to articulate strategies that denied inner feelings and calculated behaviour for the sake of exterior effect alone.⁷ In the years immediately after the First World War, the language of emotional immediacy cultivated during the Wilhelmine era continued to be used in the service of visions of a new and more democratic society. But as it became clear that this new society would fail to materialise, not only writers but also artists and architects began championing outer appearance and public life instead of interiority and personal soul.

The second half of the 1920s was also a time in which consumption was dispersed outwards to the exteriority of the street, aided by the massive increase in electric lighting, in advertising and shop displays (pl. 44). The labyrinthine spaces of nineteenth-century department stores and the glass-roofed arcades had previously simulated interiority in the public realm (pl. 45). But by the late 1920s this form of shopping experience had become out-



46 Paul Mählberg, Nirosta-Laden, Düsseldorf, 1928. From *Moderne Ladenbauten* (Berlin: Ernst Pollak, 1929).

moded and consumption was firmly located on the street.⁸ New materials, like stainless steel, made possible lighter structures for façades and aided in blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior (pl. 46). The architect Paul Mählberg was explicit about the creative potential herein. Stainless steel, he declared, was a particularly congenial building material because 'by its use in the construction of shops, the interior can be brought more towards the exterior'.⁹ Thus the prospective customer, Mählberg argued, would be more likely to take a look inside. As far as the exhibition of art was concerned, the central new development was the emergence in the late 1920s of a conception of the art gallery as a neutral container with bare white walls and a flexible, functional interior space. The route to this conception was not via fashionable notions of domestic interior space but stemmed from Bolshevik Russia and its introduction of a collective subject into the context of the art exhibition. But as this form of exhibiting became more widespread – by the early 1930s the colourful walls of more and more contemporary art galleries were painted white in Germany – it also lost the radical aims that had initially inspired it. Eventually, when the Nazis came to power in 1933, these aims were turned on their head. While the white walls remained in museums, a heavy grandeur now opposed the flexibility and temporary character of the avant-garde exhibition experiments. Instead of a public, collective and discursive experience, the intended viewing effect was now reverence, admiration and, ultimately, subordination.

Expressionism, Colour Psychology and Art Galleries in Weimar Germany

In 1914 the first monograph on Expressionism was published: Paul Fechter's *Der Expressionismus*. It discussed both the artists that had come together in the Blaue Reiter group in Munich and those that had formed the Brücke in Dresden as champions of inner expression against the supposedly naturalist inclinations of French Impressionism.¹⁰ Both the Blaue Reiter and the Brücke had already ceased to exist. Yet, a few years later, by the end of the First World War, Expressionism had become the most popular and famous contemporary German art movement. Surviving photographs of gallery exhibitions between 1909 and 1912 show that both groups chose to hang their work on very dark walls rather than against the lighter tones that had become fashionable in museums following the Secessionist exhibitions.¹¹ The Blaue Reiter artist Gabriele Münter, Kandinsky's lover at the time, photographed the famous group exhibition held at the Galerie Thannhauser in Munich in 1911 (pl. 47). The pictures were shown on what were most probably dark blue to black walls, much like those of the Brücke show three years earlier at the Galerie Emil Richter in Dresden. For both Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, the initiators of the Munich exhibition, colours had an important symbolic significance. Following the Romantic tradition of colour theory, as revived by the Theosophical movement of the turn of the century, they believed that the colour blue connoted masculine spirituality.¹² As blue deepens towards black, Kandinsky wrote in 1911 in *On the Spiritual in Art*, 'it assumes overtones of super-human sorrow. It becomes like an infinite self-absorption into that profound state of seriousness which has, and can have, no end'.¹³ Blue-black, then, had for Kandinsky the same significance as white was to have for Malevich a few years later. He believed that it produced a sense of depth that pointed towards a spiritual infinity combining with a feeling of meditative tranquillity. Similar emotions were to be expected from the exhibition's spectators in response to the display, and an immediate emotional reaction was also aimed at the Brücke exhibitions, albeit with a less symbolic intention. What mattered to them was colour's luminosity. They liberally applied their colours in saturated hues intended to produce tensions of contrast. Dark outlines often separated colour fields and increased their luminosity. This was clearly also the effect they hoped to achieve with the dark walls of their exhibition galleries. What the Brücke artists shared with the Blaue Reiter group was the conviction that intense colours and their contrasts produced intense emotional reactions.

Speculation among artists and art critics on the emotional effects of colour continued and even intensified in the immediate post-war years. One prominent advocate of colour in architecture was Bruno Taut, who, together with Walter Gropius and other Expressionist artists, had been a member of the Revolutionary Workers Art Council in 1918. In his Expressionist and visionary phase – lasting until 1923 – Taut edited the journal *Frühlicht*, which promoted a utopian, non-functional approach to building. Influenced by the dreamy glass fantasies of the pre-war poet and science fiction author Paul Scheerbart, Taut demanded that colour be used as a means for the expression of the joy of life in a new society.¹⁴ Even after he had abandoned Expressionism in favour of the functionalism



47 *Der Blaue Reiter*, exhibition at Galerie Thannhauser, Munich, 1911.

being promoted by the Bauhaus and others, Taut published a bestselling book on interior decoration in which he strongly advocated the use of colour. The great advantage of individuals' different colour choices, he claimed, would be that no two domestic interiors would resemble one another.¹⁵ While for Taut the impact of colours could not be systematised and remained thoroughly subjective, he did not doubt their psycho-physical effects. In the 1921–2 winter issue of *Frühlicht* he published an account by the director of the Munich society for research into light and colour, Ewald Paul, on the effects of colours on the nerves. What Paul had to say was not particularly new, since such ideas had been common currency ever since Goethe's colour theory, or at least since the studies by Féré.

Paul merely reiterated the finding that ultraviolet and purple have a soothing effect on nervous characters.¹⁶ What gave this study new impetus, however, as shown by a letter from a war veteran published in Paul's article, was the trauma experienced by soldiers in the trenches. As early as the autumn of 1914 doctors working in military hospitals were reporting a new psychological illness, shell shock, thought to be caused by relentless exposure to heavy artillery at the front. Instead of being attentive, alert and responsive, its victims were irritable, giddy and, most of all, unable to concentrate.¹⁷ The ideal state of absorbed interiority celebrated before the war had lost any meaning for many who returned traumatised from the front. Yet they proved remarkably receptive to psychological treatments on their return. As John Gage has pointed out, the First World War was the time when colour was most widely used in therapeutic treatments in hospital wards.¹⁸

The emotional impact of colours was also a central subject of study at the Bauhaus during its Weimar years. In contrast to Taut, the Bauhaus teachers Johannes Itten and Kandinsky thought they could ascribe definite psychological qualities to colours.¹⁹ Writing after the Second World War, Itten recalled that he had asked his pupils to arrange colours according to their own sense of harmony. He then interpreted their characters from the result. It is notable that at the very time that psychologists had abandoned the attempt to determine subjective colour meaning experimentally,²⁰ confident claims like those made by Itten and Kandinsky achieved a high degree of authority simply by virtue of their being asserted by a fair number of people in the art world.

The situation was no different in psychology. Whereas experimental psychologists refrained from research on colour perception in the 1920s,²¹ its discussion shifted to the burgeoning field of psycho-technology. Psycho-technology was first proposed as a field of research by the German-American Hugo Münsterberg, who in 1912 called for the application of experimental psychology to all areas of work and industry.²² Münsterberg and other psycho-technologists were keen – if not uncritical – advocates of the Taylorian system for the rationalisation of the workplace and the adjustment of workers to new technologies and production processes. They saw psycho-technology as a way of remedying the mechanistic and coercive aspects of Taylorism by introducing aptitude tests, personnel departments and counselling into modern firms. After some early successes, particularly with regard to aptitude tests and job selection processes, during the 1920s the psycho-technologists expanded their scope to many other fields of social activity, from education to acting as expert witnesses in courts of law. Yet many of the claims put forward by psycho-technologists were more self-promotion than the product of sound research and evidence.²³ Colour perception is a case in point. This was of particular interest, of course, to the advertising industry, and psycho-technologists argued vigorously that their expertise could be of great use in this field. Colour, text and layout decisions should not be left to artists, they claimed, but should be made on the basis of psycho-technological research.²⁴ Before the First World War, it was believed that there was a direct link between artistic quality in advertising and the latter's power to sell products, but now the reverse was true: the subtle emotive suggestion conveyed by an advertisement was more important than its aesthetic appearance. An extensive discussion of the formal qualities of good advertisements

appeared in 1920 in Rudolf Seyffert's *Die Reklame des Kaufmanns*, a discussion that was to be more or less repeated in later handbooks on the psychology of advertising.²⁵ After giving an account of an experiment by a British poster firm in which it was established that dark print on a light (yellow or white) background was more legible at a distance than light print on a dark background, Seyffert takes up Wilhelm Wundt's discussion of the emotional effects of colour, then presents Goethe's views on the psychological significance of colours (yellow = lively, red = serious and splendid, green = calm, etc.). He then cites some pre-war studies of colour preferences among men, women and children before finishing with Wundt's account of colour harmony. What had been contentious before the war amongst experimental psychologists was now uncritically presented as authoritative.

While strong contrasts were championed by museum directors before 1914, this too had not been uncontentious. Those like Lange and Lichtwark who were interested in reaching a broader public were in favour of strong wall colours, while the more neutral backgrounds had become, as we have seen, a distinguishing mark of elitist circles shortly before the war. It was strong wall colours, however, that experienced a resurgence in the young republic. Many of the advocates became keen promoters of German Expressionism in the 1920s. Museums acquired some Expressionist works before the First World War, but the lists published in the journal *Museum der Gegenwart* (edited by Justi) demonstrate that they first became highly desirable in public collections during the years of the Weimar Republic.²⁶ Among the Expressionists' early patrons were Karl Ernst Osthaus in Hagen, Max Sauerlandt in Halle and Gustav Pauli in Bremen, all avid promoters of a broader museum public, and all three were staunch advocates of richly coloured walls in museums. Their work at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (arts and crafts) in Hamburg, the Folkwang Museum in Essen and the Kunsthalle in Hamburg demonstrates that the increasing popularity of Expressionism in the 1920s did not lead museum directors to revise their display principles.²⁷ On the contrary, this popularity seems to have reinforced the predilection for rich colours and individualised interiors that had developed in the pre-war years.²⁸

The first opportunity for a thorough refurbishment of a museum after the First World War arose at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg. After Max Sauerlandt was appointed director in 1918, he immediately abandoned the museum's organising principle based on techniques and materials in favour of one that displayed cultural, artistic and stylistic contexts. Varying wall colours were intended to draw together and distinguish different historical periods, cultural contexts and artworks. Wall colours were not chosen to correspond to the supposedly preferred colour of the historical epoch itself but to produce an 'immediate sensual experience', one that could be said to capture loosely the spirit of an age.²⁹ Sauerlandt identified dark blue as the proper background for the 'religious seriousness' of the Middle Ages, an energetic golden-yellow for the 'manly worldly joy' of the German Renaissance, deep red-brown for the splendour of the Baroque age and a light sea-green for the delicate fragility of the Rococo. What is striking in Sauerlandt's choice of wall colours is the effort to determine an age's predominant *Lebensgefühl* (sense of life). This was precisely the language in which Bruno Taut championed colour in the immediate

post-war years. Sauerlandt also acquired wooden sculptures by the Brücke artists Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and displayed them in front of white and off-white walls in the staircase of the building.³⁰ For Sauerlandt these artists were important because they gave expression to contemporary anxieties while at the same time offering an aesthetic resolution.³¹ For some time whitewashing walls had been commended by architects from Olbrich to Le Corbusier as a sign of fresh, simple, peasant lifestyles.³² When the Expressionists produced interior decorations for their clients, however, as Schmidt-Rottluff did for the art historian Rosa Schapire in Hamburg, the walls were covered in strong contrasting colours.³³ White in the context of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, therefore, was not intended as a neutral background but as a contrasting colour in its own right. Justi had bemoaned the diminution of tonal values that occurred in the display of artwork against bright walls, but this was no loss for the saturated hues of Expressionist art.³⁴

White walls were also chosen as the background for the display of the Brücke artists in Essen's refurbished Folkwang Museum in 1928. But the dark walls of the Expressionist exhibitions before the war appeared too. The director Ernst Gosebruch, a friend of Sauerlandt,³⁵ asked Hinnerk Scheper, a Bauhaus teacher, to conceive the colour scheme. When Karl Ernst Osthaus died in 1921 the town of Hagen was undecided as to whether they would keep his collection. Following a concerted effort by local industrialists, Osthaus's art and artefacts were eventually acquired for Essen in 1922 and displayed together with the small municipal collection in two formerly private villas. When Gosebruch was appointed director he commissioned the architect Edmund Körner to design a new connecting building. The Folkwang Museum did not only display European artworks from the Middle Ages to Expressionism, but also a broad range of non-European artefacts.³⁶ The task for the architect was therefore to house an extremely heterogeneous collection, and the result was a remarkably open and flexible ground plan. Given Gosebruch's close involvement with the new building, it is likely that he worked intimately with Scheper on the wall colours as well. In 1932 he wrote an account of the decoration and hang.³⁷ Erich Heckel's triptych *Die Genesenden* of 1912 was displayed with other works by Heckel on white walls above a door to the lecture hall (pl. 48). 'Just as the artists of the Expressionist era like to surround themselves in their homes with the creations of exotic art with which they feel related in their excesses', Gosebruch argued, so too they were surrounded here with figurines and vessels from ancient cultures in China, Japan and India.³⁸ An Expressionist of the younger generation, Emil Nolde, was displayed on dark walls together with some African woodcarvings. This choice was defended in much the same terms as white walls were for the display of Expressionist works: the deep contrast formed by black, according to Gosebruch, enhanced the rich luminosity of Nolde's painting. Against this background they came to radiate and glow like the stained glass in medieval cathedral windows – which had inspired the artist in the first place. Paintings by Manet and Renoir, on the other hand, were hung on a purple velvet wall, and the German Impressionists on violet. Gosebruch justified these choices by pointing out that in contrast to the explosion of bright colours in Expressionism, the previous generation of artists had used subtler nuances that required more finely tuned contrasts. He argued that the domi-



48 Ernst Gosebruch, display of Erich Heckel's triptych *Die Genesenden* in the Folkwang Museum, Essen, 1928. From *Die Kunst*, vol. 33 (1932), p. 16.

nant hue of works like Manet's *Singer Fauré as Hamlet* and Trübner's *Lady in Grey* was silvery grey, a colour that chimed best with the purple and violet tints of the wall.³⁹

It is remarkable how little the reasons behind museum directors' decisions about background colour had changed from the pre-war years.⁴⁰ The strong colour contrasts that dominated Expressionist works seem to have reinforced in their advocates the soundness of a strategy that remained controversial before the First World War. When white was used as a background for Expressionist works it seems to have been chosen in order to highlight the strong colour effects. Whereas previously, for example in the work of Behrens and the Viennese Secession, white or off-white walls were used as a means to produce a graphic linear impression, museum directors in the 1920s justified its use in terms of its effect on colours. Gustav Pauli, who had already been a strong advocate of contrasting backgrounds at the Mannheim conference in 1903, argued in 1928:

The stronger the colours of the paintings, the more decided may be the brightness of the background. Our Expressionists of the now defunct Brücke bear black well – or white. I have also seen some loud Böcklin pictures successfully displayed on black, just as it is well known that medieval paintings with their strong local colours appear well on white.⁴¹



49 Expressionist Room, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, circa 1928. From Paul Clemen et al., *Karl Koetschau* (Düsseldorf: Verlag des Kunstvereins, 1928), p. 182.

Interestingly, however, Pauli, now director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, displayed the Expressionist artist Franz Marc in a room fitted with a fashionable contemporary wallpaper (pl. 49). The irregular zigzag motif appears in pattern books of the successful wallpaper firm Salubra and was widely advertised and promoted in articles on interior decoration.⁴² By the early 1920s Expressionism had become a style in the world of fashion rather than a radical artistic gesture. Its visual forms were employed in the production design of famous films like *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919), and used to sell ink (pl. 50),⁴³ or indeed adapted as a wallpaper pattern. The use of such wallpaper by Gustav Pauli for the Expressionist room in the museum in Hamburg underscores the way that Expressionism allowed itself to be an extension of the discourse of interiority that governed the Wilhelmine years. Indeed, as late as 1928 Pauli argued that gallery displays should be intimate, concentrated and restful.⁴⁴

Ludwig Justi too had no reason to revise his convictions in the 1920s. It was easy enough to promote Expressionism with the language of immediacy and interiority – Justi was also a fervent supporter of German Expressionism in the 1920s.⁴⁵ It proved somewhat prob-



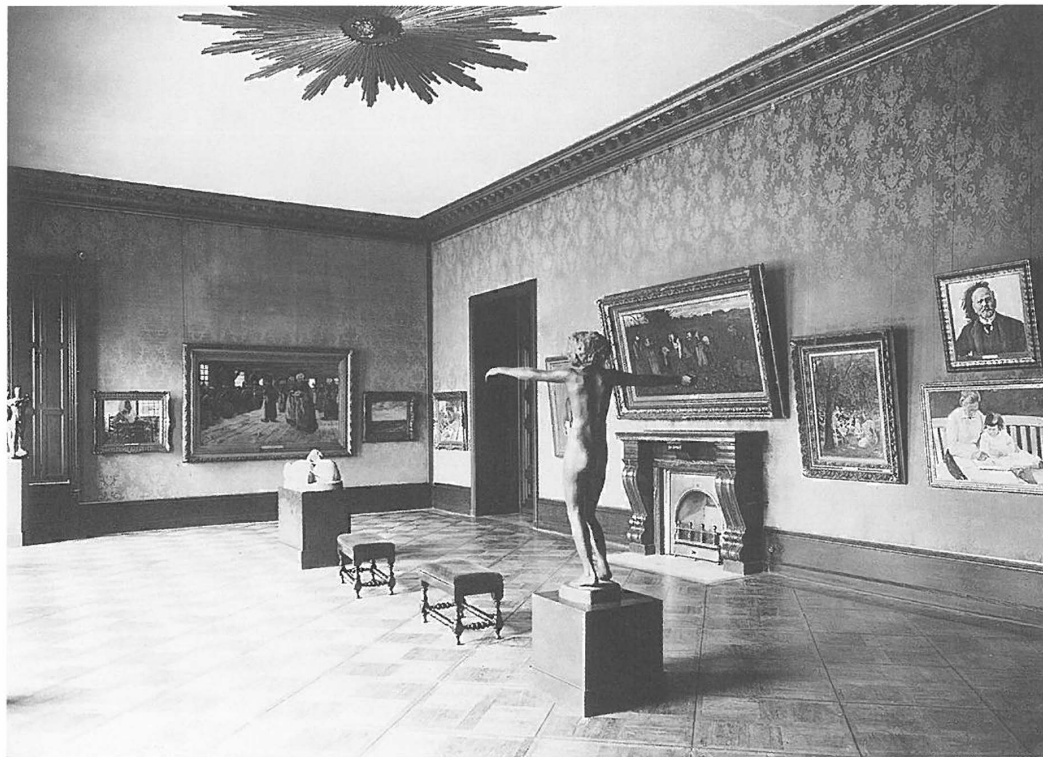
50 César Klein, advertising for Pelikan-Tinte, 1919, mixed media on cardboard, 60 × 49 cm.



51 Heinrich Strack, Kronprinzenpalais, Berlin, circa 1920, postcard.

lematic, however, for the more functional and flexible design that was developed in the second half of the decade at the Bauhaus and elsewhere. Yet Justi also assimilated this more reduced and less intimate style in his museum displays as a new form of fashionable interior decoration.

It was through great good fortune that Justi received a third chance at a thorough refurbishment of a gallery when other museum directors still had to bide their time. He obtained permission from the government of the young republic to expand the Nationalgalerie in 1919 of all years, a time of street turmoil and revolution. In contrast to the Wilhelmine years, there were very few new projects for museums in the 1920s, and most refurbishments had to wait until the years of economic stabilisation between 1924 and 1929. Yet Justi was lucky that the Kaiser's abdication in 1918 was followed by negotiations to expropriate the royal family's property, including the Kronprinzenpalais, the crown prince's palace, on the central thoroughfare of Berlin, Unter den Linden (pl. 51), which was declared a sub-department of the Nationalgalerie. When Justi decided to show work only by living artists in this building and to increase attendance numbers through a steady flow of exhibitions, he carved out a place for himself in museum history as the first director of a 'contemporary art museum'. The 'New Department of the Nationalgalerie', as the Kronprinzenpalais was called, was an important model for the Museum of Modern Art in New York (the subject of the next chapter), whose first director, Alfred Barr, spent formative years in Germany in the late 1920s.⁴⁶



52 Ludwig Justi, display of work by Max Liebermann in the Kronprinzenpalais, Berlin, 1919.

When the museum opened in 1919 the rooms on the first and second floors retained much of the atmosphere that they had had as royal living quarters (pl. 52). The silken tapestry, wooden panelling, fireplaces and stucco are characteristic of the ornate and elegant environment enjoyed by the prince and princess before they were evicted. Liebermann's work was shown here on a patterned green background, Wilhelm Trübner on red, the French Impressionists on gold-yellow and Corinth and Slevogt on light blue.⁴⁷ Although Justi did try to tone down the living-room atmosphere somewhat, he was delighted to find splendid royal wall hangings on the main floors and tried to prevent the princess from taking them with her.⁴⁸ When he redecorated the less sumptuous top floor in 1928 for the display of contemporary work, he chose, as he had done before (in the Secession rooms in the Nationalgalerie), a light grey with a darker shade in the lower part of the wall. Most remarkable, however, were the rooms on this floor dedicated to Max Beckmann and Lyonel Feininger. In contrast to his usual opulent display strategy, these appeared almost bare, painted in brilliant white with no panelling on the lower wall (pl. 53). The reason for this departure was, according to Justi, a changed taste in interior design. The works shown here, he declared, were not destined for more traditional homes but for the white walls of contemporary Bauhaus-style interiors.⁴⁹ A series of pictures of the upper floor in the early



53 Ludwig Justi, display of work by Max Beckmann in the Kronprinzenpalais, Berlin, 1933.

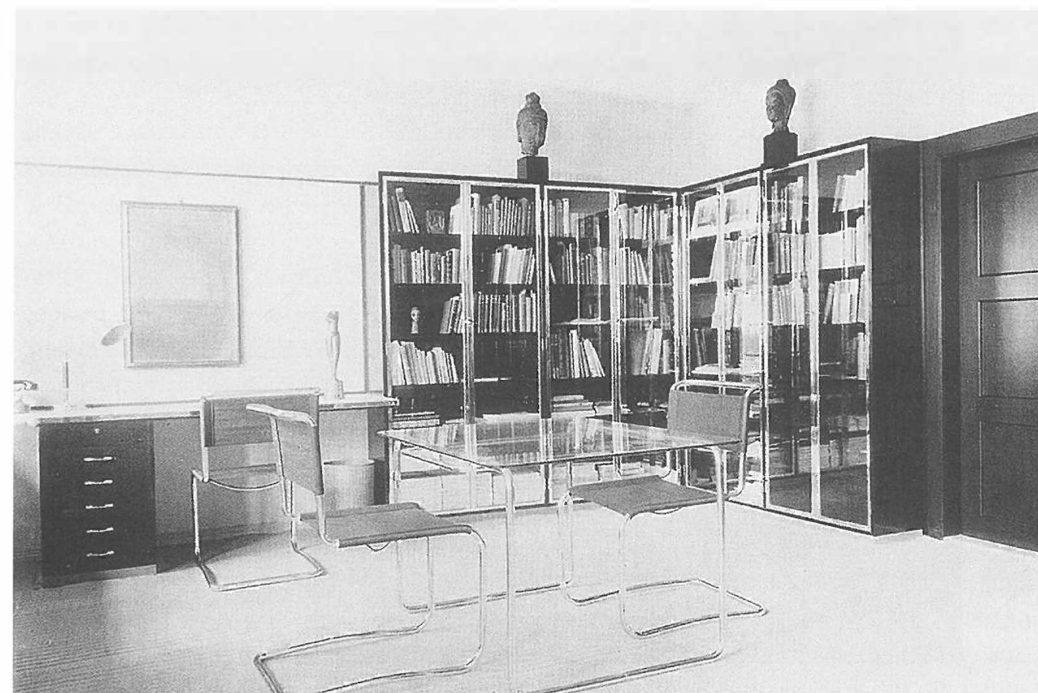
1930s show that Justi had by now changed his display to a more reduced style.⁵⁰ Furniture had been almost entirely removed; pictures were by and large asymmetrically hung and aligned on their bottom lines (typically for Justi); and the colour scheme was kept to shades ranging from white to grey (pl. 54). Far from being a pioneer of the idea of the art museum as a neutral container, however, Justi was simply continuing a display strategy that he had developed before the First World War.⁵¹ Then as now he was taking his cue from fashionable interior decor and adapting it to the museum.

As he had done in the old Nationalgalerie, Justi cultivated a circle of wealthy friends for his new museum of contemporary art in order to raise money for purchases and important loans independent of the state. His most important patron during the 1920s was Eduard, Baron von der Heydt. Von der Heydt was a banker who collected contemporary and Asian art. He was a remarkable figure who played a central role in social life in the 1920s. A member of an old-established banking family, he founded his own branch of the firm in



54 Ludwig Justi, display of work by Emil Nolde in the Kronprinzenpalais, Berlin, 1933.

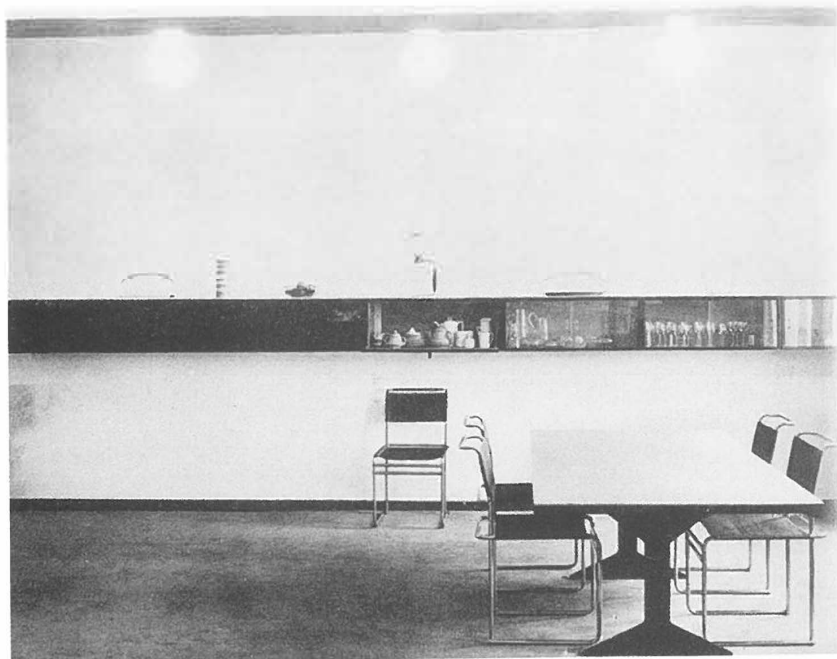
Amsterdam in 1920 and this is where he and his family for the most part lived. Von der Heydt was a staunch monarchist and among the guests at his and his wife's extravagant social events was the exiled Kaiser, Wilhelm II, whose financial affairs were handled by von der Heydt. In 1926 von der Heydt acquired the famous estate of Monte Verità near Ascona. Monte Verità had been a centre for the reform movement before the First World War, embracing causes from nudism to occultism. Von der Heydt commissioned a hotel building for the site from the architect Emil Fahrenkamp, but he himself lived more simply in one of the old huts and invited like-minded friends to stay, among them Ludwig Justi. Monarchist yet cosmopolitan, nature worshipper yet an energetic promoter of intellectual debate, von der Heydt extended his hospitality to royalists and anarchists alike. While the interior of his house in Amsterdam was in a traditional mould,⁵² his house in Berlin was ultra-modern. It was built in 1927 by the architect Karl Hoffmann on the terrain of the newly opened Berlin golf course, the epicentre of Berlin high society, and two years later von der Heydt commissioned the Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer for the interior decoration (pl. 55). Just a few pieces of furniture were placed in front of smooth white walls and only a few works of art were on display. Had von der Heydt needed an interior decorator



55 Marcel Breuer, interior of Haus von der Heydt in Berlin, 1929. From Herbert Hoffmann, *Die Neue Raumkunst in Europa und Amerika* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1930), p. 34.

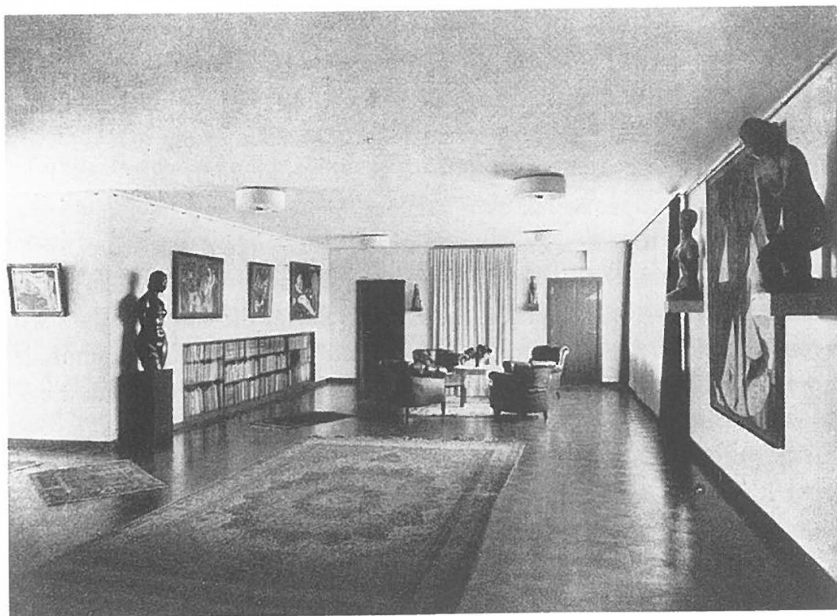
twenty years earlier he might have turned to Henry van der Velde, then being employed by the equally wealthy private collector Karl Ernst Osthaus. The rooms might have been transformed into a carefully turned colourful *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Instead, the peculiar appeal of von der Heydt's Berlin interior consists in the understated contrast of materials and their qualities: the polished chrome furniture set against the natural straw mat on the floor, the shiny glass cases placed against matt white walls. In contrast to other Bauhaus pupils, Breuer, who had recently opened his own practice in Berlin, had developed a small but fashionable reputation by the late 1920s. In 1926 the innovative theatre director Erwin Piscator commissioned Breuer, then still a student at the Bauhaus in Dessau, to design his home (pl. 56), and one of the owners of the famous Berlin mosaic and glass workshops, Puhl & Wagner, Gottfried Heinersdorff, followed suit in 1928. More commissions came in, among them, famously, the exercise studio and living quarters of Hilde Levi, built in 1930 in Berlin-Charlottenburg, in which the new architectural style and the fashionable cult of the body were brought together.⁵³

Mies van der Rohe was another architect employed in the late 1920s and early 1930s to design interiors in Berlin and elsewhere.⁵⁴ His all-white design of 1929–30 for the silk merchant and collector of contemporary art Hermann Lange in Krefeld was prominently featured in the museum literature of the time (pl. 57). The furniture colours are subdued in



56 Marcel Breuer, interior of Haus Piscator, 1926. From Herbert Hoffmann, *Die Neue Raumkunst in Europa und Amerika* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1930), p. 34.

57 Mies van der Rohe, interior of Haus Lange in Krefeld, 1930. From *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1931), p. 160.



favour of the Expressionist work, which is hung at an intimate height (because of the low ceiling) with wide gaps between the paintings.⁵⁵ The living room shown here contained sculptures by Wilhelm Lehmbruck and paintings by Kokoschka, Chagall, Hofer, Kirchner, Macke and Marc. Lange, too, was recruited by Justi into the powerful group of patrons, Friends of the Nationalgalerie.⁵⁶

The encounter of Breuer's and Mies van der Rohe's design in the homes of his wealthy patrons reinforced in Justi an appreciation, it seems, of a new ultra-modern interior decoration. Yet the architects and a growing circle of critics were motivated by a different conception of space. Instead of creating rooms as an expression of what Simmel called a 'personal soul', they valued standard, functional features and, most of all, a new opening to the exterior world. In 1930 the critic J. E. Hammann expressed this difference vividly in the journal *Die Form*:

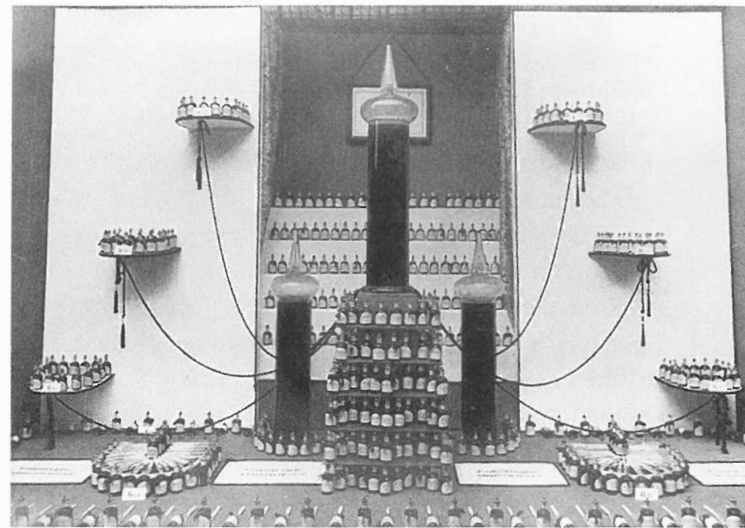
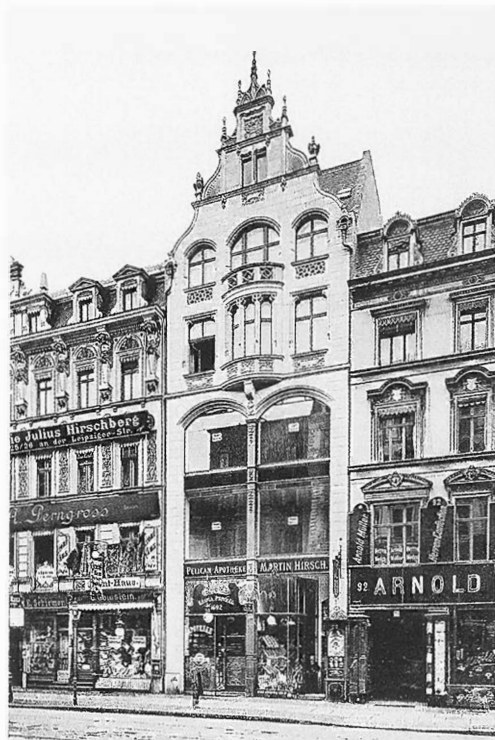
The interior as home has gained a new, a different meaning of living. It is no longer satisfied with being merely a closed room. From a purely phenomenological standpoint, the whitewashed walls alone have exploded the old notions. One no longer wishes to be closed off from the exterior world, from nature, in a sentimental romantic sunken dimness. Rather one seeks [the exterior world] through the use of all means, and not only through the given options of big windows, house or roof gardens, verandas and so on, but also through the breadth created with the illusion of white paint. The human being of today wants freedom, air and light; he needs distance for his thoughts and ideas. The furniture, beds, and almost all furnishings disappear in the wall. The room becomes empty, allows movement and liberates in contrast to a time where it was only possible, with the utmost dexterity, to find one's way through 'living rooms' darkened by multiple door and window curtains and crowded with knick-knacks and furniture of all styles. In the whitewashed, almost empty room there stands today the minimum of absolutely necessary furniture, as if one were outside.⁵⁷

As the 1920s progressed, the rejection of inwardness became a dominant theme in avant-garde circles.

The Street

Siegfried Kracauer detected a general shift towards exteriority during the years of relative stability from 1924 to 1929. Whereas the immediate post-war years were a time of hope in spiritual renewal, personal freedom and communal activity, even revolution, the late 1920s were marked, according to Kracauer, by a denial of emotions and deep reflection.⁵⁸ Born of a deep disorientation, when old familiar patterns of behaviour were proving to be ineffective in the new political circumstances of the young republic, people availed themselves of 'surface-level expressions' – *Oberflächenäusserungen* – in Kracauer's terminology.⁵⁹

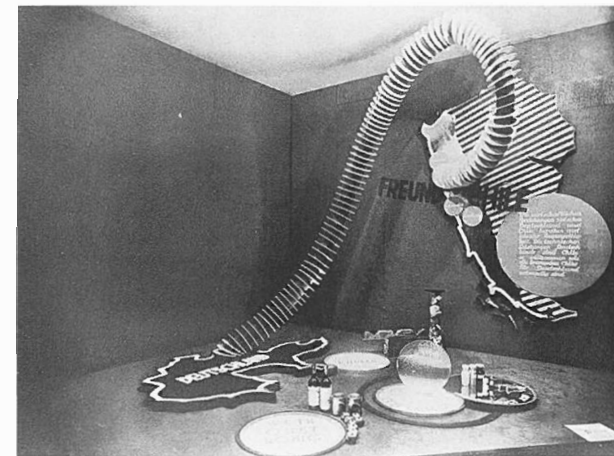
According to Kracauer, the shift was most clearly apparent in contemporary cinema. The public's need to exorcise the emotional turmoil of the war and post-war years was capi-



59 (above) Shop window display at the department store Hermann Tietz, Leipziger Strasse in Berlin, circa 1910. From Elisabeth von Stephani-Hahn, *Schaufensterkunst*, 3rd edn (Berlin: L. Schottlaender, 1926), p. 42.

58 (left) View of Leipziger Strasse in Berlin, circa 1900. From Leo Colze, *Berliner Warenhäuser* (Berlin: Seemann, 1908).

talised on in the Expressionist design and bizarre story-line of films like Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* of 1919. For Kracauer, the film repressed and submerged a revolutionary narrative into the psychological realm. 'Wiene's film', he wrote, 'does suggest that during their retreat into themselves the Germans were stirred to reconsider their traditional belief in authority.'⁶⁰ On the other hand, Walther Ruttmann's film of 1927, *Berlin: Die Symphonie der Grossstadt* expressed the disinterest in psychological reflection of the later boom years. The film was a decided turn away from Expressionistic concerns with inner life in favour of a representation of the external world. Ruttmann, later to be a left-wing activist as well as Leni Riefenstahl's collaborator on the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph des Willens* (The Triumph of the Will), had been trained in making advertising films. *Berlin: Die Symphonie der Grossstadt* was a so-called contingent film, produced in order to fulfil the requirement introduced by the government in 1924 that for each foreign film bought and shown in Germany there had to be a German production – a measure intended to stem the tide of Hollywood imports. But Ruttmann's montage of scenes from a day in the life of Berlin, extending from dawn to dusk, turned out to be a great international success. The appeal of the film consisted in its skilful cutting, which mimicked the dramatic visual rhythms of metropolitan life. For Kracauer, such montage films were symptomatic of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), of a time in thrall to the givenness of exterior life.⁶¹ It helped reorient people to peaceful life on the street.⁶² No longer



60 Reimann School, shop window display in Berlin, circa 1929. From Frederick Kiesler, *Contemporary Art Applied to the Store and Its Display* (London: Pitman, 1930), p. 133.

remembered as the setting for riot that it had been intermittently from 1918 until the time of the currency reform in 1923, the street now became a site for the cultivation of consumption.

There was indeed a significant transformation of the street in the 1920s. It made itself palpable to the passer-by in the form of shop windows. This development is clearly seen in a comparison of two photographs, one at the turn of the century of Berlin's traditional shopping street, the Leipziger Strasse, and one taken in the 1920s of the newly fashionable area further west on the Kurfürstendamm (pls 58 and 44). In the turn-of-the-century street, various shops vied for attention with crowded displays of individual items behind large glass windows. On the Kurfürstendamm, however, the new shops literally reached out onto the pavement and drew the street into themselves. The perfumery Kopp & Joseph, designed by the architects Arthur Korn and Weitzmann, juts out into the shopping mall with a showcase, blurring the distinction between inside and outside. Its bright illumination at night shows the explosion in the commercial use of electric light that took place in the 1920s. The street became a spectacular experience not only by day, but by night too.⁶³ Even the displays themselves underwent significant changes.⁶⁴ The Deutscher Werkbund and others had promoted the reform of shop window design at the turn of the century, opposing indiscriminately crowded or incongruously illusionistic window displays. But their preferred designs ordered items in a graphic rhythm similar to Peter Behrens's ornamentation of exhibition interiors (pl. 59).⁶⁵ In the late 1920s a different kind of window display emerged that emphasised factual information about the products. Just a few select objects were placed in functional relationships and highlighted against a white or off-white background. While the decorative shop window of the reform movement aimed to attract customers through the immediate psycho-physical impact of colours and forms, the new displays embodied an aesthetic of rationality and persuasive argument (pl. 60).⁶⁶ Its roots lay in a particular exhibition experiment that was most radically developed by former Bauhaus teachers and students in 1928.

Exhibitions as Collective Experience

At the end of the 1920s two types of exhibitions were developed that abandoned the previous generations' preoccupation with interiority and intimacy in favour of a public and collective viewing experience. One was developed by former Bauhaus members and emphasised the discursive and rational aspects of exhibitions, the other by Constructivist artists whose aim was the creation of a phenomenological experience of collectivity.

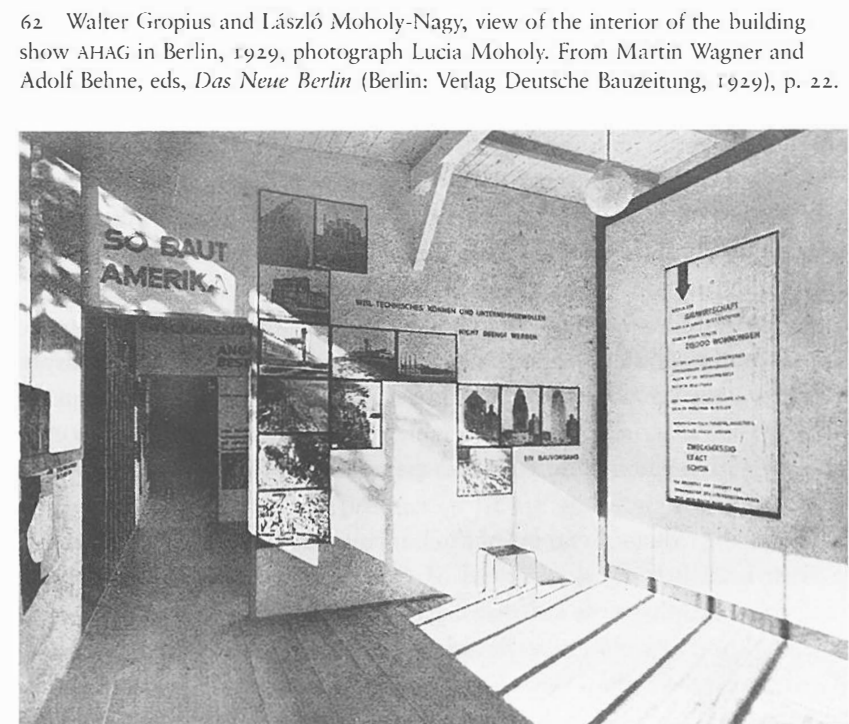
Discursive Space

Already in his initial manifesto for the Bauhaus in 1919, the founder and first director of the art and architecture school, Walter Gropius, included as one of the aims 'new research into the nature of the exhibitions, to solve the problem of displaying visual work and sculpture within the framework of architecture'.⁶⁷ It was not until after Gropius left in 1928, however, that he and other Bauhaus members, most notably László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer, began to design temporary exhibitions (an exception was the one and only Bauhaus exhibition of 1923, which was less than satisfying). One of the first, for which Gropius was responsible, was the design for the commercial exhibition spaces of the building firm AHAG in Berlin-Zehlendorf, owned by Gropius's friend and early supporter Adolf Sommerfeld. The aim of the exhibition was to convey simply and strikingly the advantages of new over old housing and living.⁶⁸ Responsible for the display was Moholy-Nagy, whose gifted first wife Lucia photographed the exhibition spaces (pls 61 and 62). The design was featured in a journal that more than any other promoted new building in Berlin, Martin Wagner's and Adolf Behne's *Das neue Berlin*.⁶⁹ Particularly remarkable about this white exhibition space is the way in which it blurs the boundaries between inside and outside. Visitors drifted in and out of the rooms following a layout that Behne compared appreciatively to the way a rational thought is developed. Since the doors to the rooms are alternately placed on either the street or the garden side of the ground, 'the visitor has the feeling of a leisurely walk without losing the aim or the security of a conscious aim. Proceeding along, he sees the objects from different sides. In short: he follows the logical twists of the course of thought'.⁷⁰ The inward spectator of the turn of the century was expelled outwards into the unlimited space of exteriority. Interiority was to be abandoned in favour of the public and discursive life.

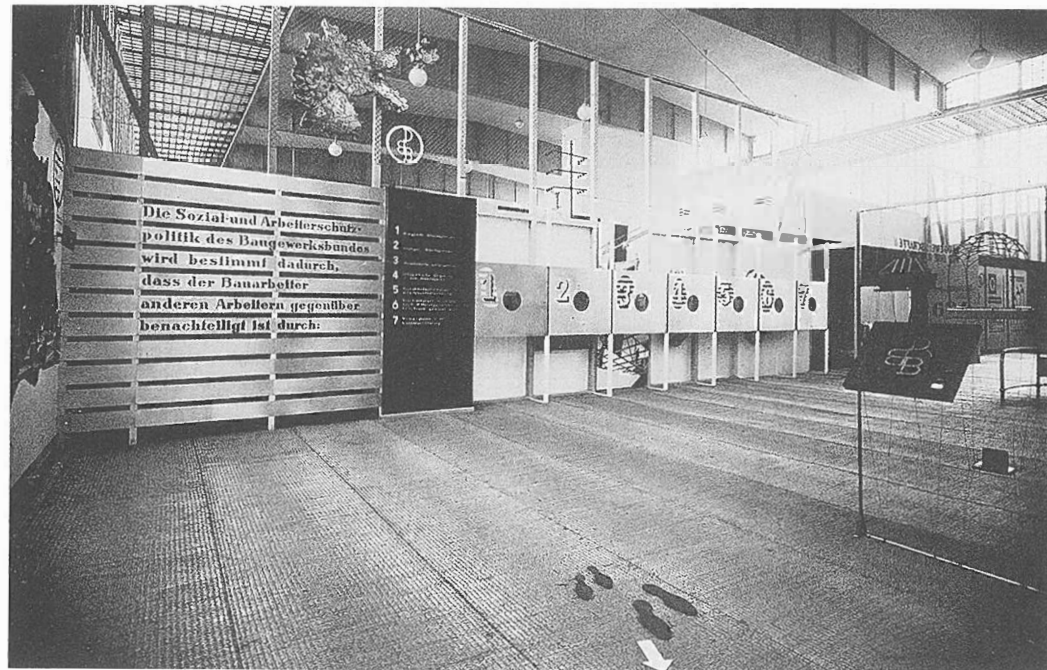
Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer continued to experiment with this mode of exhibiting in the years that followed. At a Werkbund design exhibition in Paris in 1930, they together with Marcel Breuer created an environment of interlocking elements that transcended the appearance of closed rooms. A display of contemporary architecture and furniture arranged by Bayer was paradigmatic in the way that it forced the viewer to confront exhibits from above and below, all the time taking up different viewpoints. A year later in Berlin, the group designed a sequence of rooms within a larger building and materials exhibition. Their section represented the building worker unions and consisted largely of statistics. Despite this unpromising subject matter, the team still managed to create an engaging display dominated by interactive features. For example, Bayer set up a wall in which a



61 Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy, view of the exterior of the building show AHAG in Berlin, 1929, photograph Lucia Moholy. From Martin Wagner and Adolf Behne, eds, *Das Neue Berlin* (Berlin: Verlag Deutsche Bauzeitung, 1929), p. 22.



62 Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy, view of the interior of the building show AHAG in Berlin, 1929, photograph Lucia Moholy. From Martin Wagner and Adolf Behne, eds, *Das Neue Berlin* (Berlin: Verlag Deutsche Bauzeitung, 1929), p. 22.



63 Herbert Bayer, display for the building unions at the *Deutsche Bauausstellung* in Berlin, 1931. From Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius, eds, *Bauhaus*, 1919–1928, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1938), p. 210.

single sentence appeared in bold letters on a white lattice structure: 'The social and worker protection policies of the building trade unions is determined by the fact that the building worker is disadvantaged in contrast to other workers.'⁷¹ Next to this, on a black-coloured board, were listed the disadvantages of being a worker in the building trade. These were also visually rendered. But in order to see the images, the visitor had to look through seven adjacent peepholes (pl. 63). Not far from this wall were placed footprints on the floor indicating where the viewer needed to place him or herself in order to view rotating slats that combined to form four different images. A photo frieze towered over the display. The aim of the installation was to move the viewer physically through a rational argument. Visitors were invited to follow certain lines of thought, yet were free overall to negotiate the space by themselves. Within the free-flowing transparent space a different pathway was always an option (pl. 64).

Others besides the former members of the Bauhaus explored this type of exhibition about the same time. Even before Gropius and Moholy-Nagy produced the rational layout for the display of the building firm AHAG in Berlin-Zehlendorf, Lilly Reich created something similar at a Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart.⁷² Reich, the first woman to be a member of the board of directors of the Deutscher Werkbund, was placed in charge of the interior design exhibition that accompanied the famous architecture show in Stuttgart of 1927, the



64 Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy, display for the building unions at the *Deutsche Bauausstellung* in Berlin, 1931. From Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius, eds, *Bauhaus*, 1919–1928, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1938), p. 210.

construction of the Weissenhof Siedlung under the direction of Mies van der Rohe.⁷³ The theme of Reich's part of the show was the interior of the modern home. It contained model kitchens, modern materials and industrial products. A photograph of the central hall (pl. 65) shows the way in which visitors were encouraged to drift in and out of the spaces created by the white screen walls. As in the Weissenhof Siedlung itself, the white background and flexible walls (open at the front and to the ceiling) gave a free-floating sense of unity to the otherwise diverse objects on display. The largely unified and simplified typography (by Willi Baumeister)⁷⁴ enabled visitors to orient themselves, while panels and diagrams informed them about the products, their manufacture, function and technical advantages.

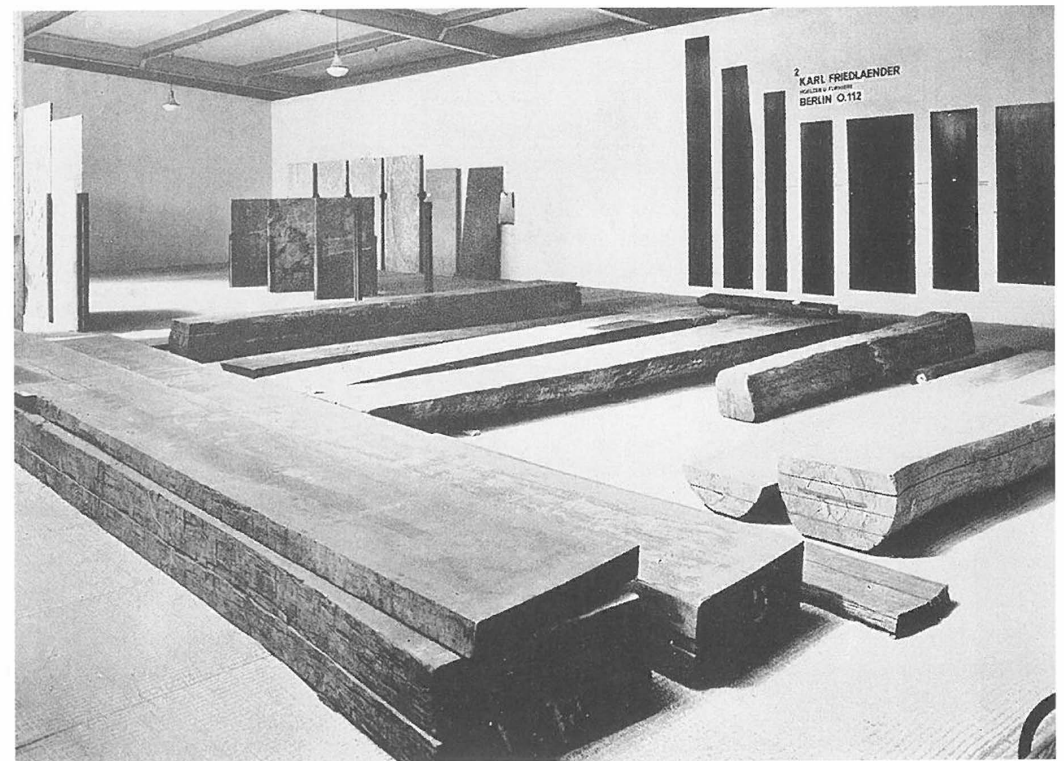
Until about 1920 Reich's professional career developed in those areas where women were making the greatest inroads into the production of art and design objects: interiors and women's dresses. With the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart, however, she began to work on a number of exhibitions that departed radically from the conventions of what in professional journals was referred to as 'women's design for women'. Her remarkable sensitivity to the intrinsic nature of materials gained her a reputation as an organiser of trade exhibitions. But she went beyond this. Her displays did not merely rely on painterly effects; they also emphasised the processes of production behind the material and so added a level



65 Lilly Reich, central hall of the Deutsche Werkbund Exhibition at Stuttgart, 1927. From Heinz Rasch and Bodo Rasch, *Wie Bauen?* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Dr Fritz Wedekind, 1928), p. 27.

of interest beyond visual attraction. Similar to the former Bauhaus members' exhibition, Reich created a type of display that offered, in Adolf Behne's words, 'an organised path along a specific set of objects in a specific and unequivocal direction and sequence', thereby appealing to the 'obligingly collaborating brain' of the spectator. Reich, Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer had thus adopted a discursive strategy that assumed subjects to exist as part of rational collectives, which the philosopher Jürgen Habermas believes to be characteristic of the still incomplete project of modernity.⁷⁵

Shortly afterwards, however, Reich began to abandon her emphasis on production processes in favour of a more sumptuous display of raw materials. The *Deutsche Bauausstellung* (German Building Exhibition) in Berlin in 1931 marked a divergence between Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer on the one hand, and Reich and Mies van der Rohe on the other. While rational argumentation dominated the former, Reich and Mies increasingly created a dynamic spatial experience that was in the first instance sensual. In Berlin, Mies was responsible for the hall that showed model houses by various modern architects. As in all their exhibitions, Mies and Reich designed a spatially irregular and dynamic environment.⁷⁶ Reich also created a building material show on the internal balcony (pl. 66). Although her arrangement is still geared towards making a rational point – about the usefulness of the material on display for the construction of modern buildings – the emphasis is now more on creating a sensually arresting arrangement. The display is striking in the way it contrasts soft fabrics with smooth surfaces and raw material with shiny



66 Lilly Reich, display of building materials at the *Deutsche Bauausstellung* in Berlin, 1931. From *Die Form*, vol. 6, no. 6 (1931), p. 218.

products. By shifting towards sensual effects, Reich's displays united the discursive ambitions of the former Bauhaus members with the direct psycho-physical impact that the Constructivist artists El Lissitzky and Friedrich Kiesler hoped to achieve in their exhibitions. She did not, however, share the latter's political ambition for an active participation of the exhibition public.

Collaborative Space

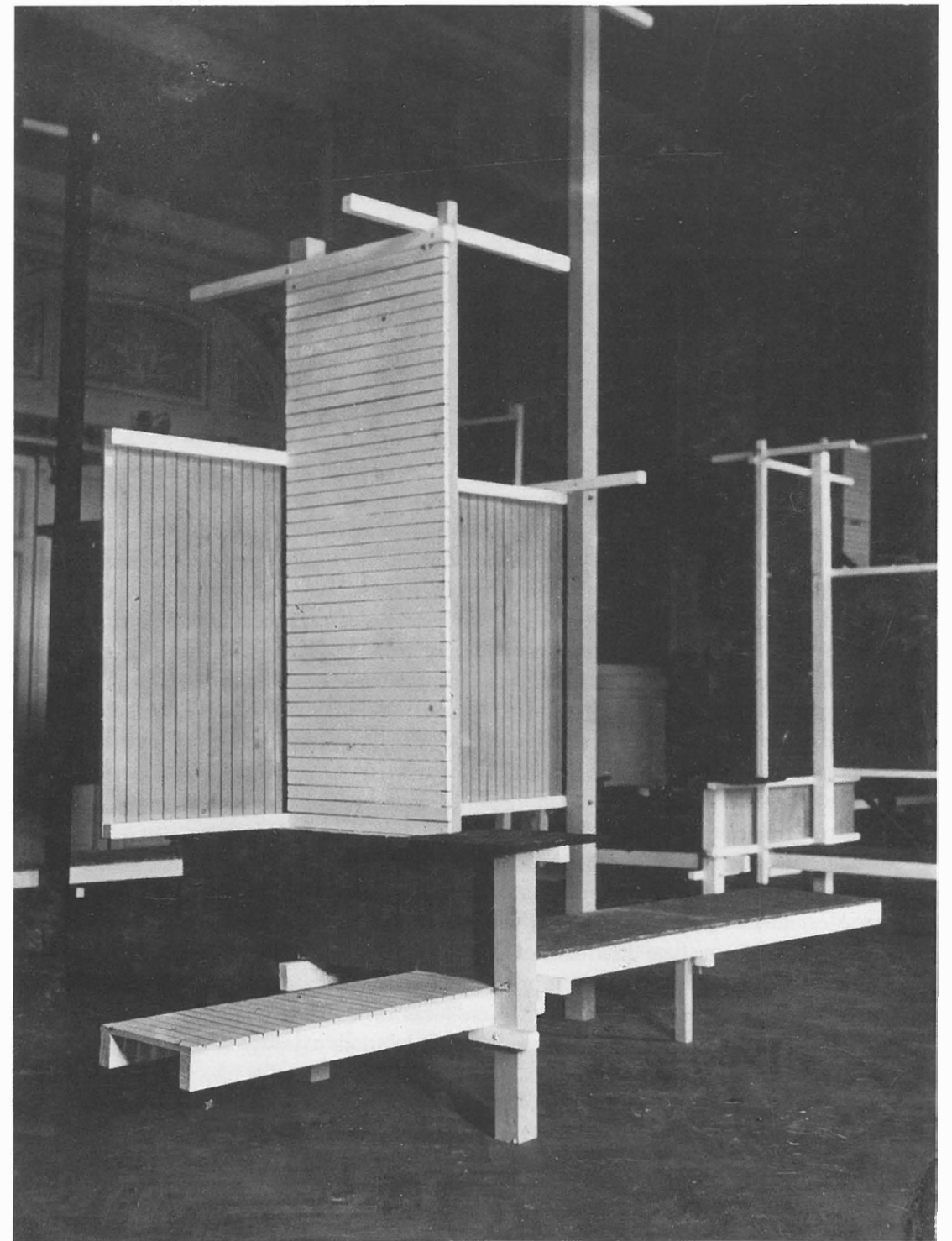
In 1923 the Dutch architect Theo van Doesburg and the Russian artist El Lissitzky met the Viennese designer Friedrich Kiesler after the latter had acted as stage designer for a play that had just opened in Berlin. Kiesler produced an ambitious electro-mechanical set for the robot drama *R.U.R.* by the Czech writer Karel Čapek. While Čapek's text projects a gloomy vision of dehumanisation and the takeover of the world by machines, Kiesler's representation of the mechanical world was full of admiration for the possibilities of machines in producing new experiences.⁷⁷ An assortment of tools and technical instruments including a megaphone,

a seismograph, an iris diaphragm and a so-called Tanagra device were incorporated into the flat stage set and were brought into operation at precisely choreographed moments. While audience and stage backdrop still remained essentially static, under the influence of van Doesburg and Lissitzky, Kiesler started to pursue the idea of a multi-perspectival space experience created by the relative motion of viewer and objects.

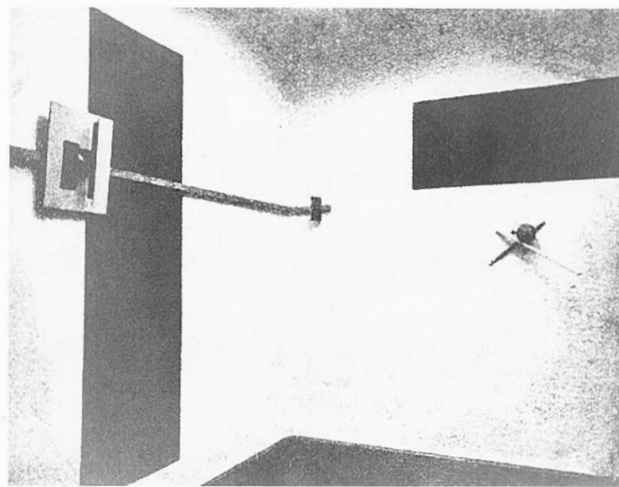
Much like the group around Tschudi and Meier-Graefe before the war, both conservatives and (some) radicals lamented the inability of modern individuals to bring experience into focus, with the consequence that the masses would come to be entirely cut off from art.⁷⁸ However, the Berlin Constructivists – and in his own way Benjamin, who moved in these circles after 1923 – saw the loss of old forms of being as leading to the possibility of a new kind of collective aesthetic experience.⁷⁹ To be sure, the modern spectator could not be expected to realise the old ideals, but they thought that the modern media created the possibility of new ones. Thus the cinema as Brecht maintained, should not aim to reproduce on the screen the Aristotelian unities of the traditional theatre. Although less ‘engaged’, the modern spectator would not be uncritical; on the contrary, in bringing the techniques of the medium of representation to people’s attention – such as the cuts, dissolves and intercuts – a new cinema would require the viewer to participate actively in the production of the story, thus creating a situation that allowed for an experience of collective participation – in anticipation of what the processes of production in a post-capitalist society would be like.

It was this kind of thinking that El Lissitzky and van Doesburg reinforced in Kiesler and that led him in 1923 to produce an extraordinary exhibition design in Vienna, the *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik* (International Exhibition of New Theatre Technique) (pl. 67). Theo van Doesburg reviewed his friend’s work enthusiastically: ‘in contrast to previous exhibitions, in which art products were hung next to one another willy-nilly, in this method the closest of relations between the different works was established by their arrangement in space.’⁸⁰ For van Doesburg, Kiesler’s installation for the display of theatre experiments by people like Lissitzky, Meyerhold and Enrico Prampolini was an example of the kind of demonstration room for collective production and reception that he had called for at the Constructivist International in Düsseldorf in 1922.⁸¹ For partly practical reasons, none of Kiesler’s exhibits could be shown on the walls of the rooms (the exhibition was staged in a concert hall in Vienna and the director feared that the decor would be damaged). But when van Doesburg published Kiesler’s design in *De Stijl* a year later and asked the artist to comment, Kiesler declared that the traditional way of hanging works of art on walls in exhibitions was in any case simply ‘decorative bluff’ and ‘romantic museum “Ersatz”’.⁸²

Kiesler’s design consisted of an extremely simple and inexpensive kit of two principal elements in black and white and a bit of red that could be easily dismantled and reassembled elsewhere.⁸³ One was the T-type (carrying type because it carried those objects that were to be hung), which consisted of several lying and hanging surfaces built into a wooden frame. The other one, the L-type (lying type), was predominantly horizontal and mainly carried models. Drawings and pictures were fixed by screw presses into gaps between the slats that made up the surfaces of the T-type, a construction that allowed for extreme flex-



67 Friedrich Kiesler, *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik*, Vienna, 1925.



68 El Lissitzky, Proun Room, *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung*, Berlin, 1923. From *ABC: Beiträge zum Bauen*, Serie 2, no. 2 (1927), p. 3.

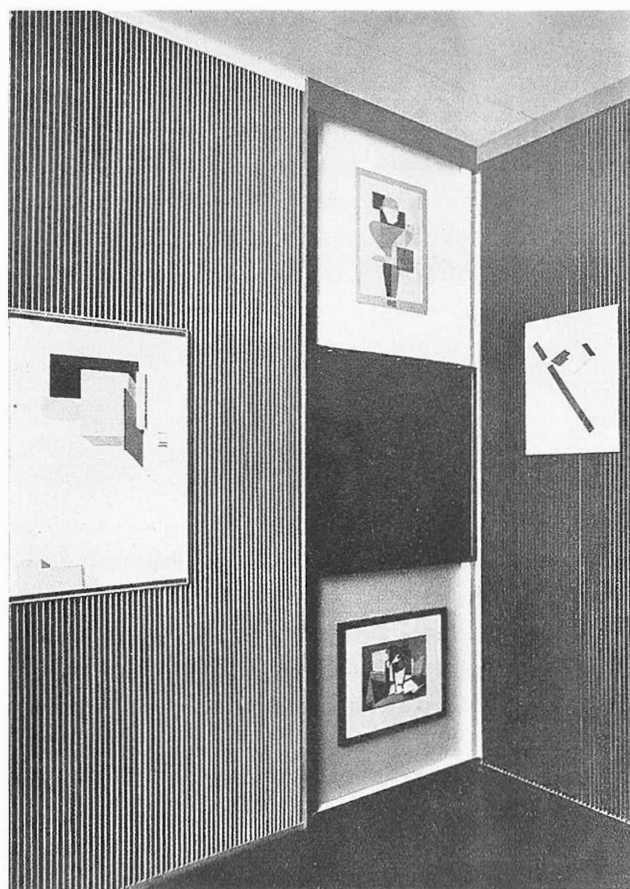
ibility in positioning. Kiesler also designed a version of the T-type that levered drawings diagonally into the room. Both of the two elements either came together to form groups of various sizes or simply stood alone. Because load-bearing elements were reduced visually as far as possible, this resulted in an asymmetric arrangement that manifested itself as an extremely dynamic open system of spatial relations.⁸⁴ The elements' transparency and interrelation required a corresponding movement of viewers and awareness of other participants' action that made absorption by any one object impossible. Kiesler created a space in which people were as aware of each other as they were of the exhibits.⁸⁵

Around the time of Kiesler's theatre exhibition in Vienna, El Lissitzky also began to experiment with displays that were even more radical in their effort to create an interactive and collective experience. Lissitzky had been familiar with conceptions of collective art from his time in Russia. Like many of his colleagues, he had actively supported the Russian Revolution and he proudly stated in his autobiography that he had designed the first Soviet flag. Alexander Bogdanov's notion of the 'Proletcult' was the most influential aesthetic programme in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. According to him, the aim of art in post-revolutionary society was to promote the effective organisation of the new collective consciousness.⁸⁶ Lissitzky brought these ideas to Berlin in 1921. After meeting van Doesburg and Kiesler, he too began focusing on exhibitions as a way to create a new public understanding of collective interaction.⁸⁷ The first time he put this idea into practice was in his famous 'Proun Room' for the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung* (Great Berlin Exhibition) of 1923 (pl. 68). Painted wooden boards, largely rectangular and of widely varying sizes, were fixed to the wall in a manner that made them seem to float. The forms eliminated corners and encouraged the viewer to a three-dimensional awareness that contradicted the traditional two-dimensional contemplation of pictures on the wall. The room in Berlin was essentially a three-dimensional installation of Lissitzky's own paintings. Three years later Lissitzky was given the chance to demonstrate that his exhibition concept had

a more general significance when he created an environment for the display of other people's work.⁸⁸ He was then asked to design an exhibition room within the framework of an international art exhibition in Dresden in 1926.⁸⁹ Here Lissitzky began to experiment with a background to the artwork that would dissolve visually the materiality and substantiality of the gallery walls. Wooden slats were fixed orthogonally to the walls, painted white on one side and black on the other. The result was that sometimes the work displayed on top would appear as if in front of a white, black or grey background, depending on the visitor's position in the room. In addition, metal grids were fixed in front of some pictures so as to force viewers to make a physical effort in grasping what was on display.

Each of El Lissitzky's exhibition rooms went a step further in demanding the viewer's active involvement in the realisation of the viewing experience.⁹⁰ But none was as successful in this respect as the room he created for the Landesmuseum in Hanover in 1928. Lissitzky had first visited Hanover in September 1922 for a performance organised by the Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. In 1923 the director of the city's art museum, Alexander Dörner, bought a work by Lissitzky from a one-man exhibition at the extremely active local art society, the Kestner Gesellschaft.⁹¹ Dörner was exceptional among German museum directors of the early 1920s in his patronage of Constructivist artists. He had come to the Hanover museum in 1919, where he found a place in need of reorganisation along the lines of the museum reform movement.⁹² He shared the desire of some of his colleagues to broaden the museum's appeal to the masses, and the way art was installed was important for Dörner in this regard. Like his colleagues, he thought that wall colours were exceptionally suitable for conveying in a direct and immediate fashion – without the prerequisite of prior learning – the spirit of the work displayed, and so he refurbished his museum accordingly.⁹³ Where Dörner parted company from other museum directors of the 1920s was in his conviction that Expressionism was no longer an adequate articulation of his own time. Instead of himself determining the nature of the rooms for the display of contemporary art, however, he turned to the artists. In 1927 Lissitzky was asked to provide a room for abstract art that would embody its guiding principles in the arrangement itself, and in 1930 László Moholy-Nagy was commissioned to design an even more up-to-date installation for contemporary art (it was never realised).⁹⁴

When Dörner commissioned El Lissitzky to create what came to be called the 'Abstract Cabinet' (*Kabinett der Abstrakten*) he had already asked van Doesburg for a design. Disappointed with van Doesburg's relatively unadventurous ideas – he had proposed a room with transparent murals and fenestrated walls – Dörner approached Lissitzky in the hope of obtaining a version of his Dresden installation. Lissitzky put forward a design that would make even greater demands on the visitors' engagement than his previous rooms. When the 'Abstract Cabinet' opened in 1928 it was lined with stainless-steel slats painted, like the wooden planks in Dresden, white on one side and black on the other (pl. 69). There were sliding frames so that certain pictures could be moved. Sculpture was placed in front of a wrap-around mirror in the corner and there was a showcase underneath a blind window that needed to be turned if spectators wanted to see the entire display (pl. 5). The result was a room that shimmered and changed tonality as the spectators moved around. No two people had the same view of the works on display and the perception of each indi-



69 El Lissitzky, 'Abstract Cabinet' in the Landesmuseum, Hanover. From *Die Form*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1928), p. 1123.

vidual was affected by the actions of others engaged with the display.⁹⁵ In this way Lissitzky's room was meant to provide an immediate psycho-physical experience of what it would be like to act as a collective subject in a post-capitalist society in which interactive engagement counted more than individuality and interiority.

By the time the 'Abstract Cabinet' opened in 1928, El Lissitzky had already returned to the Soviet Union and could witness the increasing pressure towards homogenisation in Stalin's regime.⁹⁶ Avant-garde experiments were suppressed in favour of a single official aesthetic.⁹⁷ What is striking in Lissitzky's exhibition rooms is the effort to create a collective experience out of the interaction of individuals who each represent a different viewpoint. While this became anathema to the Soviet authorities, it was essential for the realisation of the 'Abstract Cabinet'. His exhibition rooms were the materialisation of Lissitzky's original revolutionary ideals reinforced by his engagement with contemporary physics.

Linda Dalrymple Henderson has argued that it was around 1920 that Lissitzky first encountered Einstein's Theory of Relativity (which had received great public attention after being confirmed by the solar eclipse of 1919), introducing him to a new conception of space

that made him question the absolutism and mysticism of his mentor Kasimir Malevich.⁹⁸ Instead of Malevich's belief in an absolute and infinite space, Lissitzky now promoted the notion of a space-time continuum. Two versions of a text called 'Proun' exist that refer to this concept: one written in Moscow in 1920 and published in van Doesburg's journal *De Stijl* in 1922, and the other given as a paper at the Moscow Institute of Artistic Culture, presumably in October 1924.⁹⁹ It was, however, only in 1924 while being treated for tuberculosis at a sanatorium in Switzerland that Lissitzky found time to study the history of mathematics and it was only then that he made explicit reference to Einstein.¹⁰⁰ While his earlier evocation was simply an inspired loose adoption of a new and highly popularised concept, by 1924 Lissitzky had – in contrast to many other artists – made a serious effort to understand its physical implication. Invoking Einstein, he states that all absolute measures and standards have been refuted:

When Einstein constructed his theory of particular and general relativity, he proved that the speed with which we measure a particular distance influences the size of the unit of measure: so that at a certain speed the unit of measure might turn out to be equal to zero. So our clocks work at different speeds on different planets (depending on how fast they go).¹⁰¹

Between 1920 and 1924, by means of his so-called Proun paintings, El Lissitzky tried to demonstrate his insight that two systems travelling at a different speed measured different distances and times. As Henderson explains:

In a Proun . . . it is the complex interrelationship among Lissitzky's dynamic forms that define the space. Often, impossible overlappings and intersections, as well as the tendency of forms to fluctuate back and forth, suggest that only a higher dimensional space could encompass such contradictions. In addition, curved forms add an element of non-Euclideanism, further evoking Einstein's space-time continuum.¹⁰²

But as Erwin Panofsky observed in a footnote to his famous contemporary essay on perspective, far from initiating a new mode of relative viewpoints and perceptions, Lissitzky's space is no less 'Euclidian' than any other empirical space.¹⁰³ His Proun paintings still gave a two-dimensional representation of forms, while evoking a third in front and behind rather than Einstein's fourth dimension of time. It seems as if Lissitzky himself realised this after 1924. In the text that Panofsky read, 'K. und Pangeometrie', Lissitzky refrained from illustrating his new conception of relative space. Instead, he stipulated an imaginary space 'so temporal that it would exist only as long as the object was in motion'.¹⁰⁴ Thereafter Lissitzky abandoned painting for a style of exhibition and book design that related to viewers or readers in actual motion. It must be said, however, that Lissitzky's use of Einstein's theory of relative space-time could never be more than metaphorical, since 'our clocks work at [significantly] different speeds' (Lissitzky) only if we travel close to the speed of light. Yet, it inspired him to conceive one of the most unusual exhibition rooms in the history of the display of art. Although the viewers of the 'Abstract Cabinet' do not travel at the speed of light, Lissitzky managed to create a room that required collaborative spectators whose viewpoints were different from but still related to one another.

Lissitzky was not alone in being inspired by the Theory of Relativity.¹⁰⁵ Dorner, too, probably under Lissitzky's influence, came to believe that Einstein's theory was more than a significant contribution to physics. In 1931 the journal *Museum der Gegenwart* published a lecture by Dorner in which he argued that Einstein's Special Theory implied a challenge to the kind of traditional, absolute point of view that had prevailed since the Renaissance.¹⁰⁶ For Dorner, Lissitzky's room was the perfect expression of a new worldview that he saw expressed not only in contemporary physics but also in avant-garde art. Moreover, in providing a direct phenomenological experience, the room would contribute towards the education of the modern spectator. Still ignorant of the implications of the new relativist vision for social processes, visitors could gain – this was Lissitzky's and Dorner's deepest conviction – a direct sense of what it would be like to live in a society that valued collective action more than individual achievement.¹⁰⁷

Common to both Kiesler's and Lissitzky's exhibition designs was the effort to create an intersubjective viewing experience. Each conceived of the viewers not as contemplative individuals in the sense of the museum reform movement, but as distracted modern co-creators of the kind that Walter Benjamin later championed in his famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'.¹⁰⁸ Active collaborative participation was essential to the realisation of the experience of their rooms.

White Walls and Flexible Space

There were significant differences between the two types of exhibition that challenged the notion of the contemplative individual hitherto cultivated in the art gallery. Lilly Reich and the former Bauhaus members created discursive spaces in which a ready-made message was transmitted like a rational argument – with which the spectators could agree or disagree. In contrast, the meaning of Lissitzky's and Kiesler's exhibitions was the product of an effort by individuals correlating their respective viewpoints. Important to both, however, was the public and intersubjective nature of viewing. It was Mies van der Rohe, Lilly Reich and the former Bauhaus members who developed the most influential signifiers of this conception: open-plan use of space and the uniform installation of white walls. Yet El Lissitzky was the first fundamentally to reconceive the meaning of space and the colour white that made this development possible. Both aspects came to connote a de-interiorised mode of exhibition more widely adopted in art galleries in the 1930s.

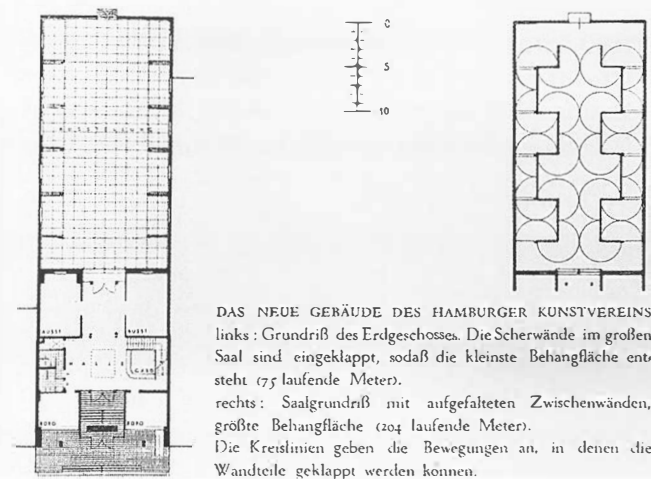
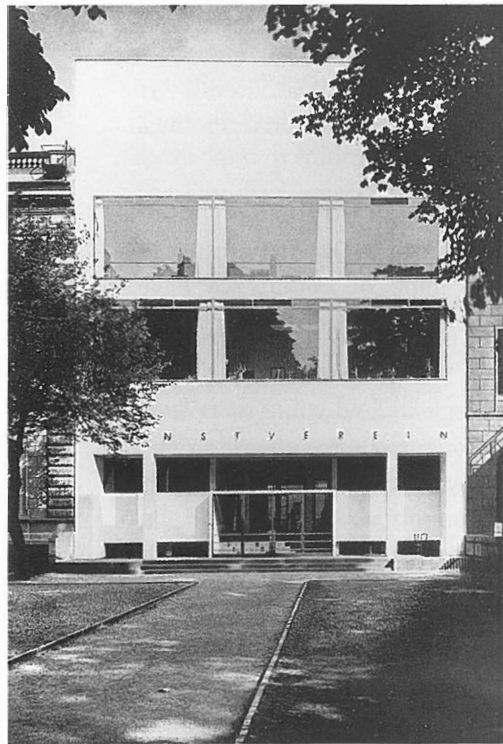
Ever since 1915 Kasimir Malevich had been producing paintings in which white figured as an infinite background for the free movement of coloured geometric figures. This was a radical conception that rejected the previous connotations of white. Whereas white or off-white was previously seen to be either a 'pure' colour, or, like a book page, an ideal background for the display of two-dimensional rhythmic ornamentation (as in Behrens's exhibition design for the Nationalgalerie in 1906), Malevich conceptualised white as infinite space. In 1919 he wrote that 'the blue colour of the sky has been overcome by the Suprematist system, it has been broken through and has entered into white, which is the true representation of infinity and therefore freed from the colour background of the sky'.¹⁰⁹

Yet colours retained mystical dimensions for Malevich, and in his work the infinity of white symbolised an absolute spiritual space beyond reality. Although Lissitzky had come under the direct influence of Malevich in 1919 when the two taught together at the Vitebsk Art Institute, his engagement with Einstein's Relativity Theory as well as revolutionary politics led him to reject his mentor's mysticism. In 1922 he argued:

The forms with which the Proun undertakes to attack space are built from materials, not aesthetics. This material is in the first phases colour. It is assumed to be the purest condition of matter in its state of energy. From the rich mine of colour we have excavated those veins which are free, or relatively so, from the attribution of any subjective character.¹¹⁰

Lissitzky turned vehemently against an immaterial psychological discussion of colour. Instead of evoking emotions and associations, he declared colours to be merely a barometer for the energy content of materials. In particular, black, white and grey shades were important indicators of energy levels: 'The contrast or harmony of two grades of black, white or grey gives us a basis for the comparison of the harmony or contrast of two technical materials, for example aluminium and granite, or concrete and iron.'¹¹¹ Energy itself, he reminded his readers in the 'Proun' essay of 1924, was the product of mass times the speed of light ($E = mc^2$). As he had done with Einstein's theory of the space-time continuum, Lissitzky creatively adapted this famous equation to his own purposes by replacing Einstein's notion of mass with that of form and argued that the growth of form was limited by the economy, just as the acceleration of mass was limited by the speed of light in Einstein's equation.¹¹² In his understanding, the economy (of a communist society) was as grand and constant as the speed of light in physics. The transition from white to black indicated an increase in energy levels. But as with the increase of energy levels of mass, the darkest black denoted absolute stasis, whereas the colour white signified the free-flowing nature of dynamic space.¹¹³ This was an understanding of white that became increasingly dominant as the decade wore on.

Lissitzky's friend Theo van Doesburg also rejected a psychological explanation of the effects of colour. In an essay of 1923 he declared: 'colour renders *visible* the spatial effect for which the architect strives. It is in this way that colour makes architecture *complete* and becomes intrinsic to it.'¹¹⁴ For van Doesburg, the most perfect interior decoration scheme used colour like any other material and applied it in a manner that presented 'a neutral impression, since it possesses neither a particular form (representing individual caprice) nor a particular colour which dominates by virtue of its fascinating effect'.¹¹⁵ Van Doesburg developed his conception of colour under the influence of the theory advanced in 1918 by the physical chemist and Nobel Prize winner Wilhelm Ostwald. Ostwald's objective was to place colour studies on a quantifiable scientific footing. For him as for Lissitzky, it was its place within the scale between black and white that was the most important indicator of the value of a certain hue.¹¹⁶ According to Ostwald, those colours with equal or proportional amounts of grey were pleasing, those with divergent black or white content displeasing. In his *Die Harmonie der Farben* of 1918, much expanded in 1921, he set out to demonstrate the wide range of harmonies made possible by his system. Ostwald asserted



70 (left) Karl Schneider, Kunstverein, Hamburg, 1930. From *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1930), p. 113.

71 (above) Karl Schneider, ground plan of the Kunstverein, Hamburg, 1930. From *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1930), p. 115.

that a harmonic arrangement of colours depended solely on their logarithmic combination as dictated by his colour atlas.¹¹⁷

While this theory did not explicitly denote white as free-flowing space, it reinforced an understanding of it (together with black and grey) as neutral. Ostwald's account of colour was first taken up by artists in the Dutch group De Stijl.¹¹⁸ In 1921 its leader, van Doesburg, brought it to the Bauhaus in Weimar, where it eventually replaced Itten's and Kandinsky's associational and subjective theories.¹¹⁹ By 1923, however, he had also absorbed El Lissitzky's understanding of white as free-flowing space. Yet without Lissitzky's knowledge of contemporary physics, van Doesburg was unable to see the distinction that followed from Einstein's theory: that space could be unbound but not unlimited. For him, white was the colour not only of unbound but also of infinite space, as it had been for Malevich – but without the latter's spiritual connotations.¹²⁰

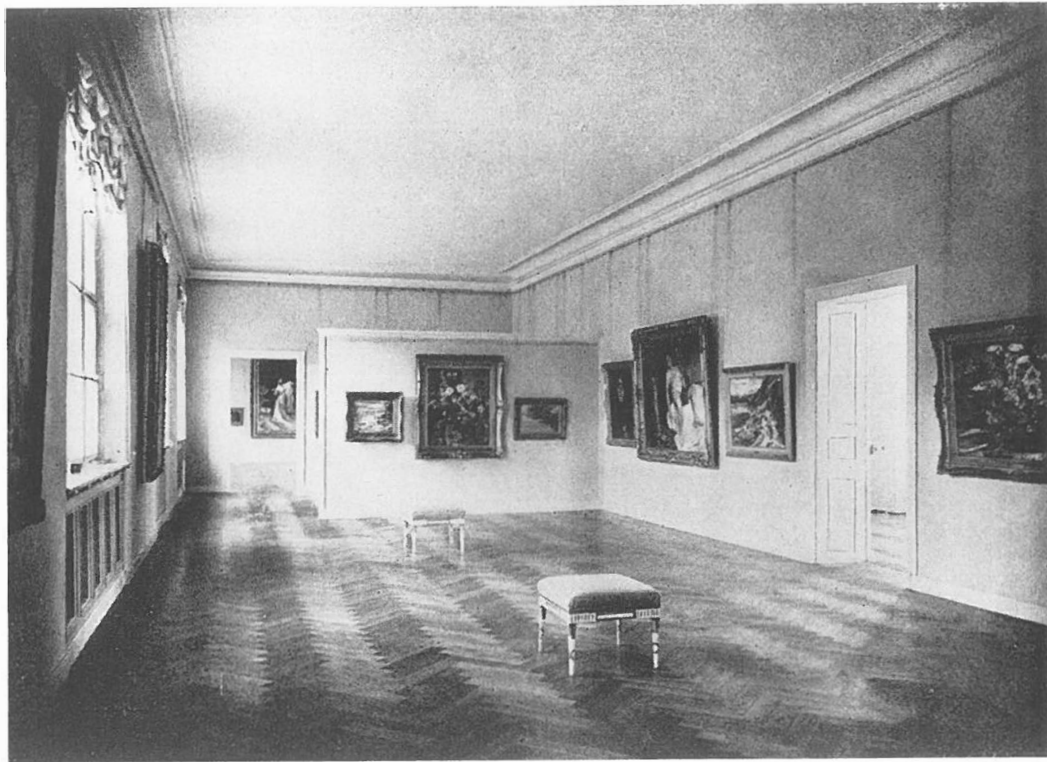
As we have seen in Hammann's appreciation of the Weissenhof Siedlung and Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart, by 1930 this had become a standard view. Although white never quite lost its association with purity, particularly since this fitted into a modern concern for hygiene and functional simplicity,¹²¹ in their effort to create flexible open spaces, white became the default setting for modern architects.¹²² The colour began to appear neutral. In his study of white as a racial signifier, the film historian and critic Richard Dyer makes the point that it is its propensity 'to stay in the background, its potential to seem to express



72 Karl Schneider, interior view of the Kunstverein, Hamburg, 1930. From Herbert Hoffmann, *Die neue Raumkunst in Europa und Amerika* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1930), p. 142.

diversity and non-particularity that constitutes its greatest power in the representation of white people.'¹²³ This particular understanding of whiteness is, for architecture at least, historically specific. White walls as a neutral foil in front of which difference becomes apparent is a modern notion originating in the 1920s.

The earliest and most remarkable art gallery constructed in Germany according to this new understanding of white denoting an unbound, uncluttered and facilitating space was the Kunstverein, the art union building, in Hamburg. It was designed, for temporary exhibitions only, by the local Bauhaus-trained architect Karl Schneider and finished in 1930 (pl. 70). With its smooth white exterior and interior walls, cubic openings and a flexible ground plan, white now became a neutral background colour. 'Appropriately for a changing exhibition space', a critic wrote, 'the architect has kept the exhibition rooms neutral in form and colour, in order to provide a suitable background for the individual and often changing subject matter on display.'¹²⁴ In notable distinction to the exhibition building of the Viennese Secession, this building did not change its interior decoration with each exhibition. Instead, it was conceived as an infinitely malleable functional space that would provide the best default setting for any given display. It was the first art gallery to assign a prime place to the prominent flexible screen walls that had previously played only a secondary role in gallery decor (pl. 71). When fully opened, they more than doubled the space available for display (pl. 72). As in the exhibitions of Lilly Reich and former Bauhaus members,



73 Hans Posse, display of work by Lovis Corinth in the Neue Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, 1931. From *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1931), p. 125.

the white background and flexible walls open at the front and to the ceiling, thus giving a free-floating sense of unity to a wide variety of displays.

According to one critic, it was the use of such screen walls that made necessary the introduction of white throughout the new museum in Dresden (opening its doors in 1931).¹²⁵ Both the screens and the white walls diverted the viewer's attention from works as part of groups, isolating them from each other and thus individualising contemplation (pl. 73). The Neue Gemäldegalerie was located not far from Semper's old museum building at the Brühlschen Terrassen and contained art from the Romantics to the Impressionists. It was the first permanent museum collection that was, without exception, displayed on white walls. In the early 1930s more and more art galleries adopted white as a uniform wall colour.¹²⁶ In doing so the curators abandoned the previous generation's effort to determine the best background colour for a group of artworks displayed together. Instead of choosing a colour that best brought out the emotional or cultural common ground of the display, walls became a neutral, flexible backdrop. This went beyond the attempts of an even earlier generation of directors to establish a single-line hang and the uniform gallery red in nineteenth-century museums. It focused attention on individual works without seeing them

as part of a larger group. 'Everything is subordinated to the principle of concentration . . . , so that one is able to contemplate with the greatest serenity the individual masterpieces', wrote one critic about the Dresden refurbishment.¹²⁷ White walls made this concentration possible and, even more importantly, it allowed a more frequent change of the display than was hitherto possible. When Karl Koetschau became temporary director of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin in 1933, he had the entire museum repainted white with the exception of one room. He justified his decision as a way of gaining flexibility:

It seems necessary to me that the Italian section should be painted in a uniform colour in order to keep it flexible, i.e., allow changes at any moment without having to pay attention to the particularities of the rooms. Apart from this fundamental consideration, I cannot leave the decoration as it is because the present colour is inappropriate and patterned in such a way that one has the impression of a wallpapered drawing room.¹²⁸

This was a firm departure from his predecessors' ideals of intimacy and interiority.¹²⁹

It was avant-garde artists and modern architects who developed the elements for this new mode of museum display. But the former Bauhaus members as well as Kiesler and Lissitzky used the flexible dynamic space in their exhibitions to promote a collective public viewing experience. Notable here is that this was neither the aim nor the reality in the new white museum spaces. The experience provided there was more traditional, directed as it was towards individuals contemplating individual works.

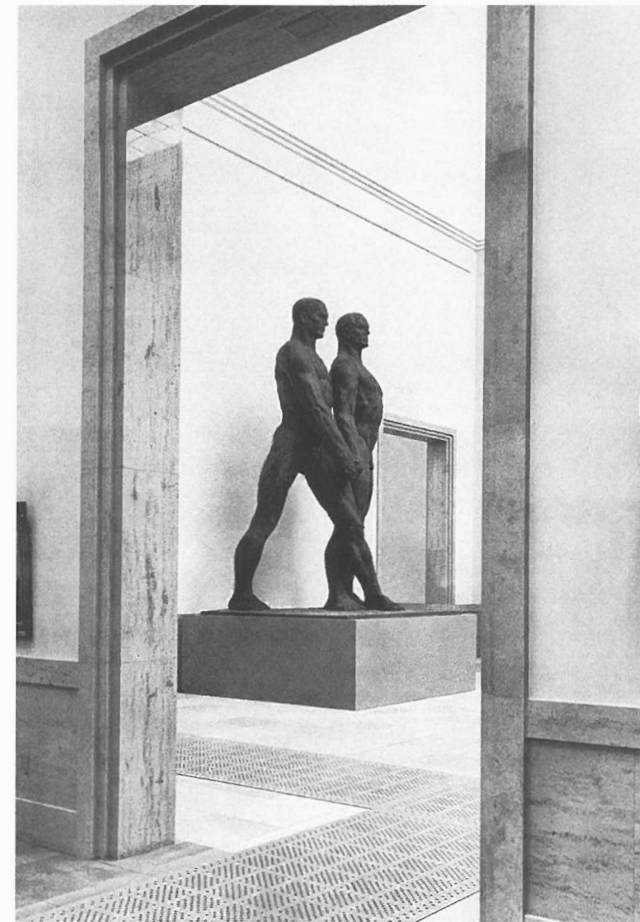
The Mass as Ornament

When the Nazis came to power in 1933 they had little reason to change the new mode of exhibiting art in the museum. On the contrary, it was during their rule that white became the standard colour in museums of all kinds.¹³⁰ Indeed, Koetschau owed his Berlin appointment to the Nazis, while Hans Posse – the director who refurbished the new gallery in Dresden with white walls – became Adolf Hitler's personal consultant for the planning of a Nazi museum of looted art.¹³¹ The functionality of the new white spaces suited the new regime's technocratic mentality. Crucially, however, the Nazis made every effort to reduce the dynamic aspect of this mode of exhibiting to a minimum. The principle of individuality, too, came to be undermined in favour of a totalitarian conception of viewing. This became most obvious in the first purpose-built museum that the Nazis opened in Munich in 1937. The architect Paul Ludwig Troost developed the design of the so-called Haus der Kunst (House of Art) in close collaboration with Hitler even before the latter came to power (pl. 74). In stark contrast to the open-flexible and multi-perspectival space of the avant-garde exhibitions, the Haus der Kunst in Munich sought to impress with the symmetrical grandeur of its marbled rooms. For a regime that crowed about its thousand-year future, the dynamic and changeable character of the experiments of the previous decade was not a desirable mode of exhibition.¹³² The enormous height of the space, emphasised by the high marble wainscoting and sparse hanging of paintings, made intimate and quiet moments of contemplation difficult (pl. 75). Instead, the whole building encouraged an atti-



74 Paul Ludwig Troost, Haus der Kunst in Munich, 1937, postcard.

75 Heinrich Hoffmann, display of work at the *Grosse deutsche Kunstausstellung* in the Haus der Kunst in Munich, 1937, postcard.



76 Heinrich Hoffmann, display of sculpture by Josef Thorak at the *Grosse deutsche Kunstausstellung* in the Haus der Kunst in Munich, 1937, postcard.

tude of deference. The massive heating grids on the floor exceeded functional requirements and produced an effect of mass channelling much like the *Autobahnen* whose building was famously promoted by Hitler (pl. 76).¹³³ The *Grosse deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) that inaugurated the Haus der Kunst was organised thematically.¹³⁴ Artworks were hung in sections that followed the traditional genre divisions advocated by the European eighteenth-century artists' academies, such as history painting, landscapes, still lifes and portraiture. In doing so, the organisers turned their backs on the recent trend towards individualised displays. Each work was part of a supra-historical group and within the group there was a decided hierarchy, with, for example, history paintings showing the Nazi leaders towering over their people, as exemplifying the pinnacle of achievement.¹³⁵ In his opening speech, Hitler described the new building as an honest and unsullied temple of art. His words echoed the racist tone of the recently published work by SS officer Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* (The Cleansing of the Temple of Art).¹³⁶ In the context of Hitler's rejection of earlier museums as 'market halls' and his evocation of the



77 George Grosz, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann, *Erste internationale Dada-Messe* in Berlin, 1920.

museum as a temple for the worship of higher values, the white walls in the building were clearly not conceived in Lissitzky's spirit. Instead of white as unbound space, the walls were meant to signify the cultural purification supposedly wrought by the Nazis.

The day after the opening of the 'Great German Art Exhibition' on 19 July 1937, an intentionally contrasting exhibition opened in a building nearby – the *Entartete Kunstausstellung* (Degenerate Art Exhibition).¹³⁷ Perhaps surprisingly, given the association with purity in the Haus der Kunst, its walls were white too. The 'Degenerate Art Exhibition' was, like the 'Great German Art Exhibition', thematically organised. But it pursued its propaganda objectives through a less systematic classification. Instead of clear categories, like history, landscape, still life and portraiture, works were arranged under headings such as 'Farmers Seen by Jews', 'Insults to German Womanhood' and 'The Mockery of God'. In attempting to create popular protest against modern art, the exhibition organisers (led by the painter Adolf Ziegler) adopted the strategies of recent avant-garde exhibitions. The exhibition used a mixture of factual inscriptions, as in Bauhaus exhibitions, and a merely polemical stance similar to the *Erste internationale Dada-Messe* (First International Dada



78 Adolf Ziegler et al., *Dada-Wall* at the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition at the Archäologisches Institut in Munich, 1937.

Fair) of 1920 (pl. 77). The factual statements, however, were pseudo-informative. So, for example, some pictures appeared with the prices paid for them by the directors of state-sponsored museums. Yet the listed prices were misleading, since they were those paid during the years of the German hyperinflation, thus conveying the impression of a massive rip-off. Also written on the walls were ironic, graffiti-like quotations ('Take Dada Seriously. It is worth it', was a quote from George Grosz that had appeared on the walls of the *First International Dada Fair*) and inscriptions with straightforward didactic messages (for example, the statement, 'the niggerising of music and theatre as well as the niggerising of the visual arts was intended to uproot the racial instinct of the *Volk* and tear down blood barriers'). For Hitler, 'Dada' epitomised those modern art movements that he found both dangerous and ridiculous. Hence the wall containing the quotation from Grosz also bore an imitation Kandinsky as wall graffiti and a picture by Paul Klee next to work by a genuine Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters, in addition to a number of Dadaist texts (pl. 78). The exhibition was intended to illustrate the contamination of pure Aryan culture that the Nazis were attempting to counter. The disorderly and crowded display and the careless scrawls on the immac-

ulate white walls signified the extent of that contamination. Moreover, the pictures were hung close to the viewers, often in a fashion that made it seem as if they were cascading to the ground. Whereas the work in the Haus der Kunst was shown above eye level, here the visitors were literally invited to look down on the work.

More than two million visitors came, nearly three and a half times as many as went to the 'First Great German Art Exhibition'. It might be, as has been suggested, that many of those visitors were there to admire secretly the exceptional collection of famous modern artworks.¹³⁸ Many more, however, would have been attracted by the promise of a great spectacle. Spectacle here, as elsewhere in Nazi culture, was an indispensable tool for the realisation of the regime's totalitarian ambitions. As in the Nazi party rallies in Nuremberg, to create a spectacle meant absorbing people in a common experience. Individual thinking and decision-making capacities were annihilated in favour of – to paraphrase Kra-cauer – the satisfaction that came from being a fragment of a mechanical body that was subservient to the directing will of the leader.¹³⁹

A Totalitarian Impulse?

It is reasonable, however, to ask whether the experiments with the creation of a collective experience in avant-garde exhibitions of the 1920s were not much closer to the totalitarian vision of the Nazis than the fierce rejection of their work in the Third Reich might suggest. Certainly, some of the former Bauhaus members likewise sought to persuade their viewers with a very clear message, and El Lissitzky equally devalued individuality. For Boris Groys the answer is clear: like Stalin, the Nazis were so vehement in their persecution of avant-garde art because they laid claim to the avant-garde impulse themselves.¹⁴⁰ But doubtless there existed a crucial difference between the avant-garde exhibitions of the late 1920s and early 1930s and the Nazi displays. From Gropius's and Moholy-Nagy's AHAG pavilions in Berlin-Zehlendorf to Lissitzky's 'Abstract Cabinet', at stake was not the abandonment of individuality in favour of an organised mass existence. On the contrary, their experiments seem to me instantiations of a negotiation between individuals and the collectivity that is a vital aspect of functioning democracies. It was crucial to the former Bauhaus members, for example, that their installations be arranged in open-plan spaces that allowed for surprising vistas. Although the viewers were invited to follow a clear argument, they were free to take up a different viewpoint at any moment. Similarly, Lissitzky's exhibitions enabled a simultaneity of opposing views that were not subsumed into a single perspective, as was the case in the Nazi spectacles. They merely demanded correlation with one another.

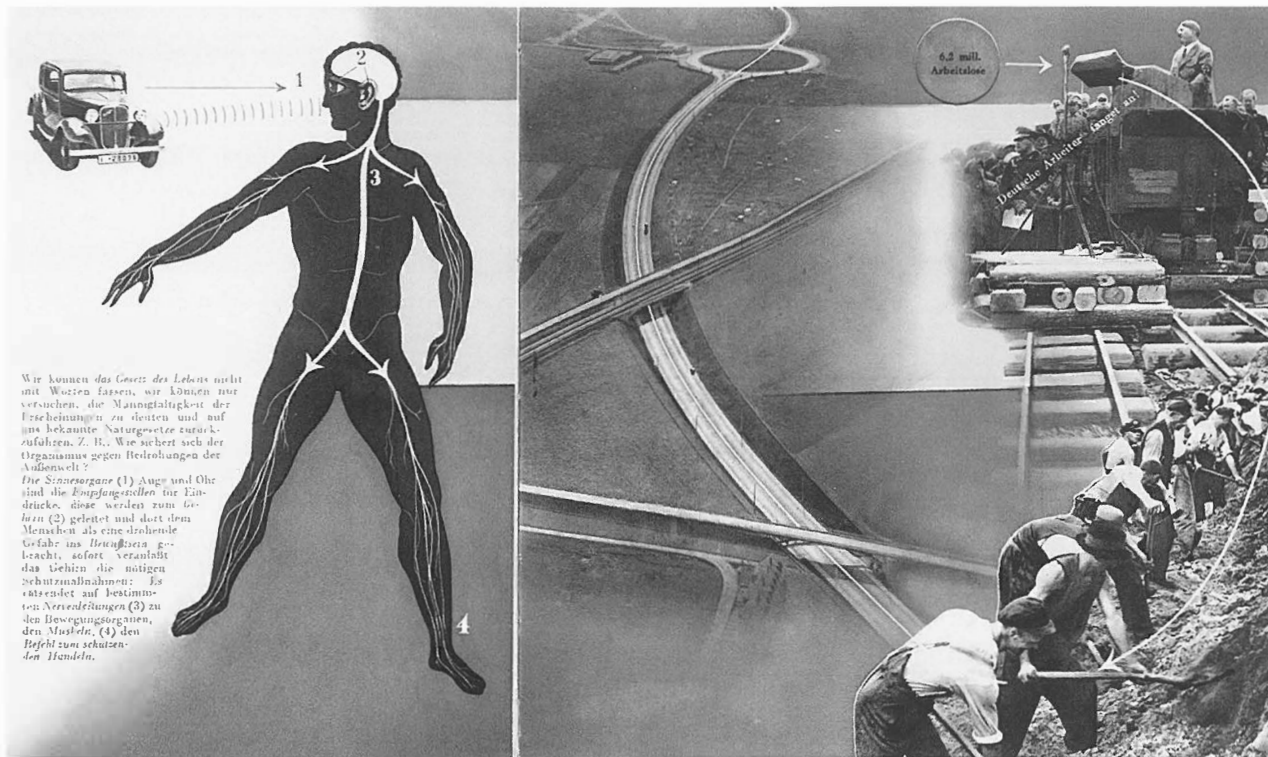
And yet, neither of these exhibition types was immune to propagandistic misuse. In the exhibitions Lissitzky organised together with his wife for the Stalinist regime after his return to Russia, the fabrication of a spectacle is the more obvious agenda, not the creation of an intersubjective experience.¹⁴¹ The first of these was the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne that opened in May 1928. *Pressa* was an international exhibition displaying newspaper and book publishing. Lissitzky and his team of collaborators had merely four months to prepare



79 El Lissitzky and Sergei Senkin, photo-mural at the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne, 1928. From *Union der Sozialistischen Sowjet-Republiken USSR*, exh. cat., *Pressa*, Cologne (Berlin: Kniga, 1928), p. 3.

the 227 exhibits.¹⁴² They came up with stunning displays of devices that attracted much attention at the time, such as a conveyor belt that transported images and information past the visitors.¹⁴³ The centrepiece, however, was Lissitzky's and Sergei Senkin's photo-mural with the title 'The Task of the Press is the Education of the Masses'. Close-up shots either of well-known individuals such as Lenin or of identifiable types such as a peasant woman were mixed with long shots of mass education at agit-prop events or of people at work in industry or agriculture (pl. 79). Images of individuals and of people en masse coexisted next to each other in the photomontage, suggesting the unproblematic flow from one to the other. The frieze, which hung just below the ceiling, was divided by red triangular banners. The individual images were deliberately placed so that they unfolded in a rhythmic flow with climaxes and rubati in an attempt to emulate a cinematic experience. Although they had no fixed viewing position, visitors were not invited to take up opposing views either, let alone correlate their different visions with each other. The aim of the exhibition was to provide a unified experience to its diverse public in the same way that the Russian media were being shown, organising the heterogeneous society into a coherent entity.

Although Lissitzky and his wife began to feel the pressure of the Stalinist regime after 1928, they remained at the centre of the visual propaganda machine and produced images that, while not at odds with their former work, were less complex and more hierarchical in conception and composition.¹⁴⁴ This was also true of Herbert Bayer, who stayed in Nazi Germany until 1938. One of his photomontages of propaganda material commissioned by



80 Herbert Bayer, photomontage for the exhibition catalogue of *Das Wunder des Lebens*, 1935. From *Das Wunder des Lebens*, exh. cat., Ausstellungshallen am Kaiserdamm (Berlin: Meisenbach Riffarth, 1935), n. p.

the Nazis for an exhibition, *Das Wunder des Lebens* (The Wonder of Life), that coincided with the Berlin Olympic Games in 1935 is notable for the way it combines a dynamic bird's-eye view (here of the German motorway) with images of the masses at work and at political rallies (pl. 80). Formally and compositionally, all lines lead towards and are subsumed by the image of the Führer at the top-right corner. In this image, what had earlier been a way of conveying a persuasive argument had subtly mutated into propaganda. Similarly, Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich designed exhibitions for the Nazis that were the antithesis of their former commitment to open and free-flowing spaces. Instead of an asymmetric arrangement, their displays were now organised around a strong central axis usually dominated by the large insignia of the regime, such as the German eagle at the *Deutsches Volk – Deutsche Arbeit* (German People, German Work) exhibition in Berlin in 1934.¹⁴⁵

It soon became clear, however, that the ultra-traditionalists among the Nazi Party's cultural advisers had won the day. Even Mies and Bayer eventually left Germany for the United States, where they brought their experience as avant-garde exhibition designers to the Museum of Modern Art.¹⁴⁶ Here Mies's dynamic concept of space became highly influen-

tial. The exiled Bauhaus members' effort to create a participatory experience, however, was a disastrous failure in New York. In the Museum of Modern Art, the white walls and free-flowing ground plan of the German avant-garde exhibitions were transformed back into a space whose principal function was to encourage individual contemplation. The notion of individuality at stake here, however, was different from the moral understanding of individuality characteristic of the nineteenth century, or the psychological understanding of it at the turn of the century. In 1930s New York, individuality came to be valued principally as the prerequisite for a vigorous capitalist society; increasingly, the Museum of Modern Art addressed its visitors as consumers. How it did so is the subject of the next chapter.



4 The Spectator as Educated Consumer

The Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1930s

As the European experiments with exhibitions and their spectators came to an end in the 1930s, a mode of viewing art emerged in New York that was to prove long-lasting and influential. But what eventually came to be known as the Museum of Modern Art idiom – the white flexible container – would have been unthinkable without the German experiments of the previous decade. Alfred H. Barr, Jr, the central figure in the history of the Museum of Modern Art, had travelled to Germany before he was appointed as the museum's first director in 1929.¹ Barr visited the Bauhaus in Dessau in November 1927 and responded with enthusiasm to the institution's attempt to link art with contemporary commercial production. He wrote later: 'I regard the three days which I spent at the Bauhaus in 1927 as one of the important incidents in my own education.'² There is no evidence, however, that Barr was directly influenced by the new exhibition strategies that Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer had developed in the late 1920s and which he probably encountered in 1931 when he was in Berlin.³ Instead, Barr initially followed Ludwig Justi's updated version of museum display based on the idea of the modern domestic interior. It was Justi's museum for contemporary art in the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin that proved most influential on Barr when he was asked to develop plans for the Museum of Modern Art in 1929.⁴ MoMA's opening shows were restrained, intimate, spacious and symmetrically arranged, just as the displays in the Kronprinzenpalais had been. Like Justi, Barr hung pictures at a relatively low level, well below the height to which viewers were accustomed in New York.⁵ Although the Museum of Modern Art showed the work of German avant-garde artists and designers at a time when many of them were outlaws in their own country, its own success in developing a distinctive exhibition idiom was one reason that the German experiments with discursive and collective modes of viewing were eventually consigned to oblivion.

Nobody in 1929 could have foreseen MoMA's huge success. The museum opened just as the United States was entering the worst economic crisis of its history. The stock market collapsed a week before the grand opening and the nation began to spiral into the

economic depression that would last until the advent of the Second World War. The famous photographs by Dorothea Lang, Walker Evans, Ben Shahn and others, produced for the Farm Security Administration, have contributed to an image of the Great Depression in terms of the plight of the rural poor.⁶ Desperate though that was, it tends to obscure, as Daniel Okrent has pointed out, that New York was in equally bad shape, if not worse:

Unpaid and often uncollectible taxes reached 15 percent of total revenues [by the early 1930s] plunging a desperate city government so deeply into debt that it owed nearly as much as the governments of all forty-eight states combined. More than a third of the city's manufacturing firms had gone out of business, and *Fortune* estimated that there were three-quarters of a million unemployed in the city, '160,000 of them at the end of their tether.' Many learned how to put together the facsimile of a free meal at the Automat, fashioning a pathetic 'tomato soup' out of ketchup and hot water.⁷

Yet, while many starved, the family that was MoMA's chief financial supporter remained relatively insulated. John D. Rockefeller, Jr, the husband of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the most powerful figure amongst the founders of the Museum of Modern Art, saw his net worth halved during the first four years of the Depression. But, as Okrent explains, 'the pain was relative: late in 1932 he could still count \$475 million in assets, and they were so productive that his income tax bill for a typical year could exceed \$8 million. (Good lawyering enabled him to keep his New York state personal property tax south of \$13,000.)'⁸ Others of the super-rich were also able to ride out the storm and several were recruited to MoMA's board of trustees, which in its first decades included Edsel Ford, president of the Ford Motor Company, and John Hay Whitney, chairman of Walt Disney. As leading industrialists and financiers, they all shared an interest in the restoration of a vibrant consumer society, and it was in this context that the Museum of Modern Art came to articulate its distinctive mode of exhibiting art.

The museum's combination of avant-garde work and sleek presentation skills proved to be a great success. By 1939 the museum had already put together a first-rate collection of modern art, one that was continuing to grow rapidly (although the intention was still to pass on works that were more than fifty years old – principally to the Metropolitan Museum).⁹ The museum increased its attendance figures through its ambitious and wide-ranging exhibitions on major themes – in 1932 it reported 173,009 visitors,¹⁰ and twelve years later 415,916¹¹ – and established itself as the institution whose collection represented the most comprehensive and authoritative overview of twentieth-century artistic developments. When more than 200 masterpieces from the collection were displayed in Berlin in 2004, the show attracted over one million visitors, one of the most successful exhibitions ever staged in Germany. Yet it was not only the works in the collection but also how they were displayed that contributed to the museum's reputation before and after the Second World War. MoMA became the institution principally responsible for establishing the still dominant mode of exhibiting modern art: the white, flexible container.

The Establishment of the White Flexible Art Container

The kind of space for which MoMA was to become famous was, however, not in place when the museum opened on 7 November 1929. The spectacular opening exhibition – including no fewer than thirty-five Cézannes, twenty-eight van Goghs, twenty-one Gauguins and seventeen Seurats – was presented in a rented (and barely disguised) office space on the twelfth floor of the Heckscher Building at 730 Fifth Avenue. 'You rode up in the jammed elevator', the trustee Edward M. Warburg remembered, 'you were told this was the Modern Museum, these commercial spacings. They tried to doctor it up differently for each exhibition, but it was very recognizable and very inhospitable.'¹² The offices in the Heckscher Building were divided into one large and one middle-sized exhibition space, two small galleries and a reading room. Many features of the location's former function – windows and doors, for example – had been hidden behind plastered walls. To judge by photographs that were taken to document the early installations, the effect was to produce a decidedly irregular exhibition space, with diagonal corners to which the rectangular ceiling beams ran at oblique angles (pl. 81). This, however, was clearly not deliberate. Barr did not accentuate

81 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, display of work by Max Beckmann and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff at the *German Painting and Sculpture* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1931. From *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1931), p. 71.



the irregularity of the rooms in order to produce the kind of free-flowing dynamic layout that Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, as well as the Bauhaus architects, had begun to play with in the late 1920s. Neither the spaces of the rooms themselves, nor the decoration of the walls nor the hanging of the pictures were particularly innovative at this stage in Barr's career. The walls in the Heckscher Building were covered in 'friar's cloth', as Barr called it, a coarsely woven material like beige hessian.¹³ According to Barr's wife, Margaret Scolari Barr, his choice of off-white 'neutral' walls and his decision to hang the pictures in a single row were novel at the time,¹⁴ and later commentators have repeated this verdict.¹⁵ But the manner in which Barr hung the pictures – generously spaced, in a single line on an off-white background – was not his invention. It had become the norm in New York by the 1920s.¹⁶ The fact that he hung the pictures intimately and at a somewhat lower height than usual shows that Barr still followed the conception of gallery-going as a private, interiorised experience that had emerged in Germany around 1900.

Yet as Barr became more experienced, he became more experimental. 'Hanging pictures is very difficult', he wrote in 1934, 'and takes alot [sic] of practice. I feel that I am just entering the second stage of hanging when I can experiment with asymmetry. Heretofore I followed perfectly conventional methods, alternating light and dark, vertical and horizontal.'¹⁷ In 1932 the museum moved out of the Heckscher Building to a townhouse owned by the Rockefellers on 53rd Street. As a survey of the extant installation photographs in MoMA's archives shows, by the early 1930s white walls had become standard in the museum.¹⁸ Barr would have observed this shift on his trips to Germany in the early 1930s, including his visits to Justi's Kronprinzenpalais (see Chapter Three). The fact, however, that the introduction of white walls into MoMA went unremarked in the press indicates that the use of white had also become common elsewhere in New York around that time.¹⁹

Barr realised his ambitions most fully, both as to the form of the display and the content of the exhibition, in 1936 with an exhibition called *Cubism and Abstract Art*. A critic noted at the time that the show was the 'most elaborate, complex and, in a sense at least, the most bewildering exhibition arranged thus far in its career by the Museum of Modern Art'.²⁰ Photographs show that the Rockefeller townhouse was stripped entirely of its decorative features for the exhibition: the dado reduced to a skirting board, the adjustable spotlights discreetly hidden in casings on the ceiling, and the pictures hung more asymmetrically than Barr had ever dared before. In one room, for example, Barr placed a metal and glass construction by César Domela-Nieuwenhuis just beneath the ceiling, above and to one side of Theo van Doesburg's *Simultaneous Counter-Composition* and Vantongerloo's *Construction of Volume Relations: $y = ax^2 + bx + 18$* (pl. 82). By disguising the domestic features of the townhouse and by hanging pictures in a more dynamic fashion than he had done previously, Barr arrived at a mode of display that he was never to abandon: the white 'neutral' container that permitted a flexible arrangement of the work on show and offered the visitor a calm, yet dynamic viewing experience.

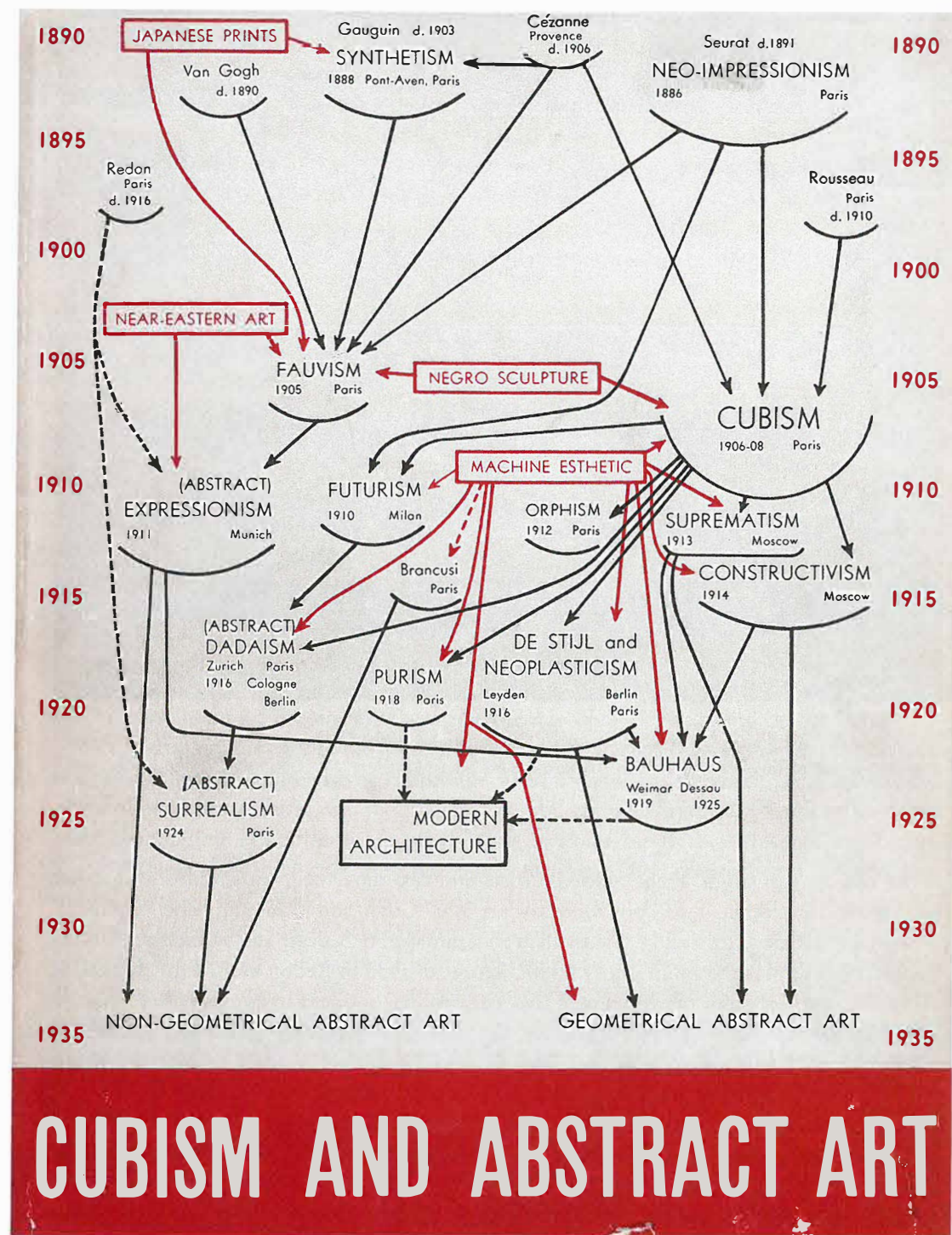
In *Cubism and Abstract Art* Barr made use of a didactic device that has since become famous: a flow chart that was displayed on the wall as well as being reproduced on the cover of the catalogue (pl. 83).²¹ In it, Barr gave a visual representation of his view of the evolution of modern art from the 1890s to the 1930s. According to Barr, six French (or,



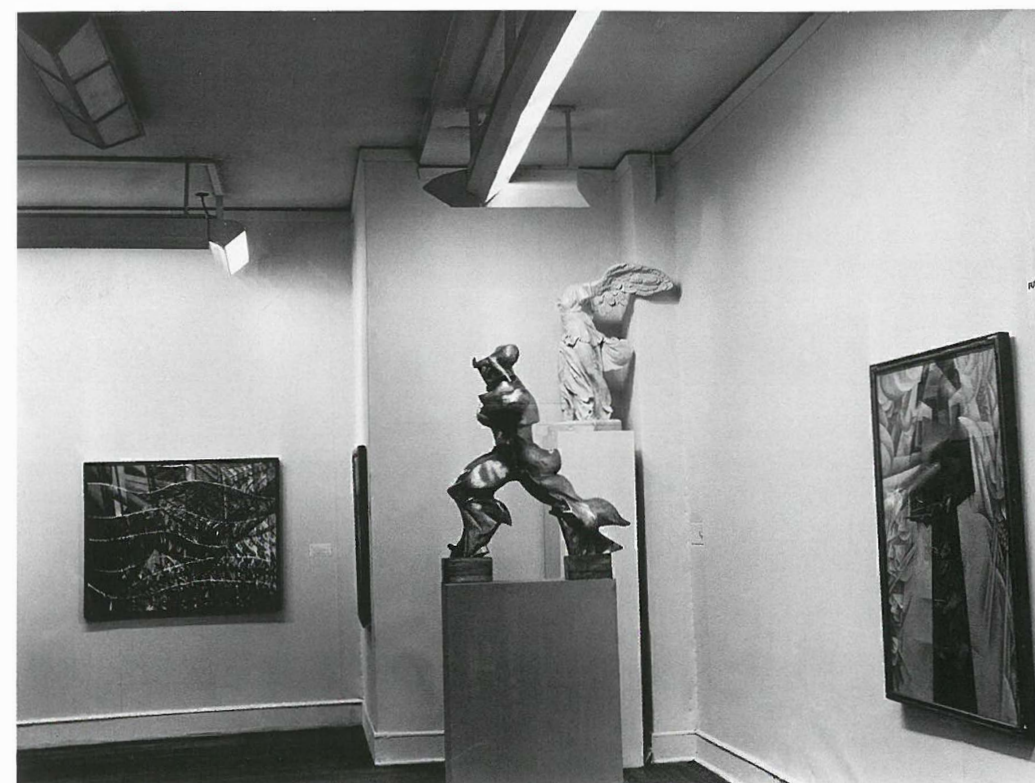
82 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, display of work by Dutch Constructivists in the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1936.

in the case of van Gogh, French-based) artists and two movements arising from them lay behind the development of contemporary art: van Gogh and Gauguin, who originated a movement that Barr called 'Synthetism'; Cézanne and Seurat, the founders of Neo-Impressionism; plus the more idiosyncratic figures of Odilon Redon and Henri Rousseau. From this starting point there emerged two streams that resulted in Fauvism and Cubism. Using arrows to map these influences on the various movements of the second decade of the twentieth century, such as Futurism, Constructivism and Dadaism, the chart ended with two main current trends that Barr respectively called 'non-geometrical abstract art' and 'geometrical abstract art'.²² It was the second of these, geometrical abstract art, that Barr presented to the public in *Cubism and Abstract Art*. Non-geometrical abstract art was to be the subject of his next big ambitious show, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, which opened on 7 December 1936, just eight months after its sister show had closed.

Barr's flow chart acknowledges influences from outside the tradition of Western modern art – they are set in boxes and were printed in red on the cover of the catalogue. But it is



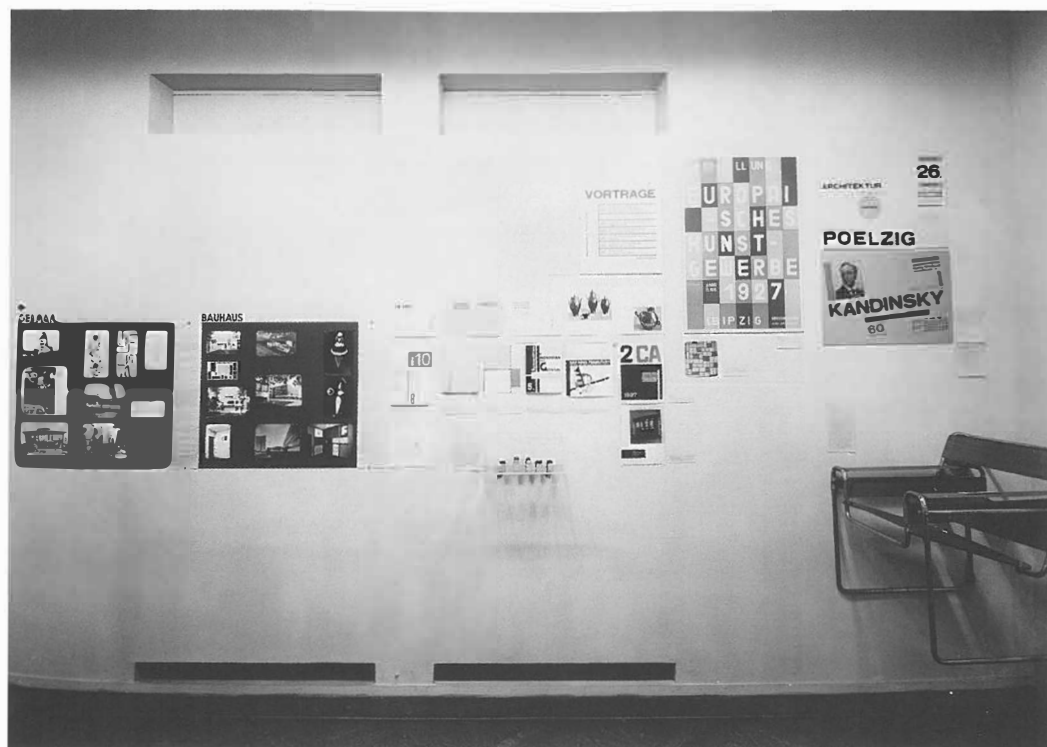
83 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, cover of the exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art*, Museum of Modern Art, 1936.



84 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, display of work by Italian Futurists in the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1936.

noteworthy that such influences are all aesthetic rather than social or scientific. For example, Barr mentions 'Japanese Prints', 'Negro Sculpture' and 'Machine Esthetic'. In the exhibition itself, these outside influences were represented in two rooms. In one, a mask from Cameroon was placed between two works by Picasso: his *Head of a Woman* of 1909-10 and a bronze sculpture of a head from 1908. In another room Barr placed a small plaster cast of the ancient *Nike of Samothrace* next to Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, a Futurist sculpture from 1913 (pl. 84). Such juxtapositions of non-European or ancient art with modern works were fairly common at the time.²³ Barr's point, however, was not (as has sometimes been supposed) to indicate the existence of universal forms running through art in different ages and societies. Rather, he was attempting to identify the visual sources for specific contemporary developments, something that his chart tried to make clear.²⁴

How painting and sculpture related to the wider culture was, in Barr's view, illustrated in the front right-hand gallery on the third floor of the exhibition. This room showed the way in which stylistic elements developed within Cubism had influenced the applied arts of architecture, theatre, film and advertising. The four walls were each given over to the



85 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, display of Bauhaus design in the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1936.

influences of a different movement. One was dedicated to the Dutch De Stijl, another to the German Bauhaus, and a third to French Purism. The Dutch wall showed, among other things, photographs of Oud's buildings and Kiesler's *City in Space* exhibition, mounted on black boards. There was also an asymmetric, multi-tiered display of samples of typography. In front hung Gerrit Rietveld's famous primary-coloured chair. The chair was shown mounted on the wall – obviously attempting to divert the viewer's attention away from considerations of comfort and practicality towards its stylistic coherence with the other works on display.

The other walls were similar. De Stijl's wall flowed into the 'German wall' – an attempt to represent visually the influence of De Stijl on the early years of the Bauhaus (pl. 85). A black board carried photographs of Gropius's and Meyers's early, still somewhat Expressionistic, Sommerfeld House and Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower, as well as Gropius's Weimar Theatre. Next to it was a board that showed work produced by the Bauhaus, including the Dessau buildings themselves, Oskar Schlemmer's ballet costumes and an image of El Lissitzky's 'Abstract Cabinet' (the last rather improperly classed as 'Bauhaus'). Samples of typography in an irregular pattern were shown above items of Bauhaus design that had gone into production: Josef Hartwig's chess set and Marcel Breuer's tubular chair. The adja-

cent 'Purism' wall centred on the relationship between Le Corbusier's paintings and his architecture and showed one of Le Corbusier's metal and leather chairs, corresponding to Rietveld's and Breuer's on the other walls. The final wall was labelled 'Influence of Cubism'. Here posters, theatre designs and film stills were assembled, including, incongruously, a still from the film *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari*, which German critics such as Kracauer had all read as an example of German Expressionism.

Barr's graphic presentation made very clear that his conception of the development of modern art differed radically from the self-understanding of many of the participants. Kandinsky, for example, to whom Barr sent a copy of the catalogue, protested that his own art could neither be adequately described as part of an inexorable march towards abstraction (for Kandinsky, there was no difference between realism and abstraction – he used both styles together, he said) nor did such a historical presentation do justice to the spiritual universality that he saw embodied in his work.²⁵

Interestingly, Barr did not explore the stylistic influence of the 'non-geometrical' strand of abstract art in the same detail, neither in this exhibition nor in the *Fantastic Art* exhibition that followed. Barr believed that Cubism's influence had run its course. According to him, Surrealism was now much more significant, although he felt that it was still too early to assess its impact.²⁶ He was convinced, however, that it was already shaping the look of the applied arts. In this he was evidently correct, as was being abundantly demonstrated outside the museum. As the show opened, Salvador Dalí made headlines with his dramatic shop windows for the Fifth Avenue department store Bonwit Teller,²⁷ and even earlier *Harper's Bazaar* reported:

You aren't going to find a solitary place to hide from surrealism this winter. Department stores have gone demented on the subject for their windows. Dress designers, advertising artists and photographers, short stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*, everywhere, surrealism.²⁸

According to the newspaper reports, black was very strongly in evidence in all of this neo-Surrealist activity. Black would also be the dominant wall colour in the spectacular exhibition that took place under the direction of Marcel Duchamp a little over a year later at the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris.²⁹ But black played little role in the display of the *Fantastic Art* exhibition; as in *Cubism and Abstract Art*, the colour of the walls in the exhibition rooms was uniformly white.

There are installation photos in the museum's archive, however, that show that sculpture was sometimes installed in front of dark curtains and, in the *Fantastic Art* exhibition, the entrance hall was dominated by a dark wall on which Hans Arp's relief *Two Heads* was displayed (pl. 86). Surrealism and Primitivist art forms were characterised by Barr as 'intuitional and emotional rather than intellectual',³⁰ and exhibitions with such themes or individual artists categorised by the museum as belonging to this trend were sometimes shown on dark walls. Dark rooms and backgrounds were dominant, for example, in René d'Harnoncourt's *Indian Art for the United States of 1941*.³¹ Black was used as a background to John Kane's *Self-Portrait* and Henri Rousseau's *The Sleeping Gypsy* in the exhibition *New Acquisitions: Modern Primitives, Artists of the People* in 1941–2, and again



86 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, entrance hall to *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1936.

behind Jean Miró's *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers* in the exhibition of recent acquisitions in February 1945.³² Interestingly, Dorothy Miller, who was responsible for the display of American contemporary art in the museum between 1942 and 1963 and who was Barr's 'trusted right hand' during those years,³³ not only installed the work of Arshile Gorky (who did indeed have roots in Surrealism) in front of a dark wall, but also exhibited Jackson Pollock's work in a darkened gallery (albeit on white walls) in 1952 (pl. 87). In the next room, which was entirely dark, Frederick (Friedrich) Kiesler's sculpture *Galaxy* emerged spot-lit from the darkness. Kiesler, who had abandoned his earlier allegiance to Constructivism, moved in Surrealist circles in New York; but displaying Pollock's work in this way represented it as art that, like Surrealism, sought to give expression to the unconscious – an interpretation that, though widespread at the time, was by no means uncontested.³⁴ The use of black as a conventional signifier for art that sprang from the depths of the psyche rather than the Apollonian mind was one of Barr's most distinctive display innovations.

MoMA's first permanent building, erected on the site of the Rockefeller townhouse, was at once the realisation of Barr's dearest dream and his greatest disappointment. He had hoped to recruit a famous European architect for the project and had contacted Mies and



87 Dorothy Miller, display of works by Jackson Pollock at the exhibition *15 Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1952.

Gropius, but the trustees overruled him. Philip L. Goodwin, a North American architect and MoMA trustee, was commissioned to work in collaboration with the firm of Edward Durell Stone.³⁵ The manoeuvring surrounding the construction of the new building in 1938–9 would cost Barr his influential position at the museum.³⁶ But as Stone later recalled, during the building process Barr was 'still calling the shots from behind the scenes'.³⁷ While the façade of the new museum with its curved canopy and pot-holed flat roof failed to establish the identity of the building as a rigorous example of functional modern architecture, Barr fought hard for the realisation of his own vision inside. This did not entail the kind of windowless space suggested by the phrase 'white cube', which was frequently applied to the museum's favoured mode of display and will be discussed below. Far from it. Barr favoured natural rather than artificial lighting and struggled bitterly to obtain it.³⁸

The exhibition floors of the museum at 11 West 53rd Street were side-lit by a single band of translucent, heat-resistant and light-diffusing Thermolux glass (pl. 88). The first-floor galleries also had a glass brick wall at the back that not only let light in but also at intervals opened up a view onto the sculpture garden. As in the Kunsthalle in Hamburg and in



88 Philip L. Goodwin and Edward D. Stone, façade of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1939.

Reich's temporary exhibitions (see Chapter Three), there were no load-bearing interior walls, so removable plywood partitions ran from the linoleum floor to the ceiling and were rearranged for each exhibition. The light fittings were mounted in strips that could be detached and reattached in different locations. As a contemporary critic reviewing the opening exhibition noted (pl. 6): 'By setting these screens at various angles, different circulation routes can be devised.'³⁹ Since the ceilings in the galleries were relatively low, between 3.60 and 4.20 metres,⁴⁰ a feeling of domestic scale was combined with a meandering route through asymmetrically arranged units and along curved walls. The closed interiority of the turn-of-the-century gallery room was replaced by a more dynamic open space, similar to those that emerged at the end of the 1920s in the exhibition installations of Reich, Mies, Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer. While the walls, at least for Barr's installations of paintings, were more often than not white, cubic enclosures were avoided where possible. And even the white backgrounds were hardly mandatory: publicity material distributed before the museum's opening stressed that the plaster of the movable walls was to be faced with a waterproof lacquer on which the museum staff could paint backgrounds of different colours to suit different exhibitions.⁴¹

Yet however much MoMA's gallery spaces can be seen as drawing on them, the various dynamic exhibition spaces created in Germany a decade earlier were qualitatively different. Barr never adopted the 'rational argument' forms of spatial organisation associated with Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer, and his imitation of the sensuality of Mies's and Reich's arrangements was limited to the pictures on the wall. Nor did he ever completely abandon the intimacy characteristic of turn-of-the-century gallery interiors.⁴² Henry McBride, a prominent New York critic, astutely summed this up in his review of the new museum building:

If the façade of the building confirms the suspicion that I have entertained this long while past, that New York simply cannot afford a curved line, the interior refutes the impeachment arrogantly, for the exhibition space is divided into innumerable alcoves that weave into each other like rose leaves on a larger scale. This provides the intimate approach to the pictures that is now deemed essential. I believe it was the late Dr Bode [Wilhelm von Bode in Berlin, see Chapter Two] who discovered that even the very best pictures can sometimes be quite nullified by the vastness of old-fashioned galleries, and since his time there has been a general effort to fit the rooms to the pictures instead of vice versa. . . . I must also add that these picture alcoves disdain coziness. Apparently, in the new museum, we shall be expected to stand up, look quickly and pass on. There are some chairs and settees, but the machine-like neatness of the rooms does not invite repose.⁴³

As McBride noted, the intimacy characteristic of the interior of MoMA differed in important respects from its turn-of-the-century predecessors. The 'machine-like neatness of the rooms' did not 'invite repose'; instead, it was reminiscent of recent shop-floor flow-management strategies.

In 1930 Frederick Kiesler tried to carve a niche for himself as a moderniser of commercial spaces and practices. Drawing on his experience of avant-garde designs in Europe, he published a book advising the American public that in modern department stores flow and



89 Philip L. Goodwin and Edward D. Stone, lobby of the Museum of Modern Art on 53rd Street in New York, 1939.

circulation were of paramount importance.⁴⁴ Where previously small rooms had been arranged around a central courtyard, advanced shop-floor design aimed at generating a more dynamic movement along partitions and stalls. He cited as an example Erich Mendelsohn's Schocken Department Store in Stuttgart of 1928, with its open ground plan and sweeping lines. When the new MoMA building opened in 1939, such advanced department store design did not yet exist in New York. The new building in fact became the embodiment of the museum's self-understanding as the mediator between artistic development and commercial practice. No previous museum had had a glass front flush with the street. Moreover, the entrance was conceived in the 'funnel' style that Kiesler thought best for business. Such an entrance slopes back and 'draws the customer in with a suction-like power'.⁴⁵ Passing through the revolving door, the visitor faced a curved information counter, similar to the reception desk of a hotel (pl. 89). Here the museum's products, its reproductions and publications, were displayed and tickets sold. At the left of the lobby was an elevator lined with sumptuous red and white veined marble. A wide black and white terrazzo stair-

case ran along the creamy white Thermolux glass of the front façade. Exotic plants were placed decoratively in the lobby, on the staircase, at the entrance to the lecture room in the basement and in the members' room on the top floor (which enjoyed its own roof terrace). They added a luxurious feeling to the otherwise cool materials used in the building. In the galleries themselves, every effort was made to avoid the feeling of a stockroom.⁴⁶ The screens were deliberately extended to the ceiling so as to give a sense of definiteness that would offset the somewhat meandering route through the gallery (pl. 6). Pictures were spaced well apart from one another and hung low.⁴⁷ The pared-down modernist style (no skirting boards, dados, ceiling ornaments or ornamental light fittings) made every cell on the visitor's route through the gallery a uniform part of a larger whole; one that was not at all static but characterised by a dynamic sweeping movement along the curved and angled walls.⁴⁸

What sort of spectator did this kind of gallery space envisage? Negatively, the Museum of Modern Art's ideal visitor was not an active spectator or seen as part of any kind of collective. Positively, the primary aim of the display was to educate. Barr made no effort to entertain in the galleries or give viewers sensual gratification – visual immersion of the latter kind became a privileged mode of viewing only during the economic boom years of the 1950s, as we shall see in the next chapter. But at the Museum of Modern Art the education was visual rather than discursive – as it had been in Gropius's, Moholy-Nagy's and Bayer's exhibitions. The diagrams that Barr placed on the exhibition walls were intended to help to guide visual appreciation, not to act as substitutes for it. The displays presented the progression of styles in modern art didactically in the hope of refining the visitor's aesthetic sensibilities. In doing so it established the museum as a space in which consumers could cultivate their taste, up-date themselves in matters of style, and recognise themselves as informed members of the consumer society that was then emerging in the United States. After 1932 the museum started to extend its reach beyond New York by sending a selection of its exhibitions on tour around the country. In this way it played a part in the establishment of what Lizabeth Cohen has called the 'Consumer's Republic'.⁴⁹

Alfred H. Barr, Jr's Vision

Barr was not primarily an academic art theorist but he did have a strong theoretical basis for his vision of what the mission of the Museum of Modern Art should be. It was formed early on in his career. As a young man he had studied art history at Princeton, where the formalist Charles Rufus Morey's vision of art dominated his intellectual development. The crucial notion that Barr took from Morey was that of 'style' – the idea (derived from the European formalists Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl) that cultures are informed by a single underlying aesthetic mode and that the fine arts are its most privileged expression. Barr then went on to Harvard, where he enrolled in Paul J. Sachs's famous course on museums.⁵⁰ Here he encountered a different conception of art history – connoisseurship – which emphasised the unique contribution of individual artists to the history of art. Barr's vision integrated elements of both traditions.

Like the connoisseurs, Barr privileged the seminal role of the creative individual. Art fed on art, developing despite, not because of, the social world around it. Yet, this did not mean that art remained a world apart, with no effect on the wider culture. The visual forms developed in the artistic realm percolated down, he believed, to other cultural expressions and in due course came to give each age a recognisable style. Barr brought his connoisseurial and formalist beliefs to bear on the art of his own time. As a young lecturer at Wellesley College in 1926, one of his first courses – on painting ‘in relation to the past, to the other arts, to aesthetic theory and to modern civilisation’ – focused on contemporary art, not normally taught in universities at the time.⁵¹

A great deal of Barr’s career as a museum director can be seen as governed by his attempts to realise this conception in practice; but it was only with *Cubism and Abstract Art* that they were fully realised. By 1936, as we have seen, he had developed a distinctive form of display that was above all didactic rather than atmospheric: the viewer was led through the galleries along a clearly prescribed route showing the development of artistic styles. Furthermore, wall charts and catalogues written by Barr presented in a highly accessible manner the exhibitions’ point of view to an extended public (pl. 83). All of these were ways of realising Barr’s conviction that it was the role of the artist to develop a style that would be as appropriate for the twentieth century as the Rococo had been for eighteenth-century France, and that it was the mission of the art museum to promote its dissemination.

The Museum as Business

The mythology that surrounds the founding of the Museum of Modern Art asserts that it was the first permanent institution dedicated to modern art in New York.⁵² Barr himself was largely responsible for this belief. During the publicity drive in the first year of the museum, he wrote:

In Detroit, Dr [Wilhelm R.] Valentiner [a German who had returned to North America after his plans for a German museum reform went nowhere; see note 18] has brought together a very stimulating collection of modern paintings, American, German, and French. The Chicago Art Institute houses the magnificent Birch-Bartlett room of masterpieces by Cézanne, Seurat, Picasso, and Matisse. The Fogg Museum of Harvard University held, last spring, the finest exhibition of modern French painting since the Armory Show of 1913. San Francisco, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Worcester have excellent modern pictures of the non-academic kind. But, in New York, that vast, that exceedingly modern metropolis, we discover a curious anomaly.⁵³

Barr failed to mention, however, that there had been several previous initiatives in the city to establish museums of modern art. He himself had learned a great deal from his visits to Alfred Stieglitz’s ‘291’ gallery (opened in 1905) and Albert Eugene Gallatin’s Gallery of Living Art (1927). There was also Katherine Dreier’s Société Anonyme, founded with the help of Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray in 1920 as a public museum for modern art.⁵⁴ Most

of these galleries showed artworks in intimate spaces that were sparsely but tastefully decorated in light, broken colours following the idiom established by the Post-Impressionists in France and the Berlin Secession (see Chapter Two).⁵⁵ One major problem with these initiatives, however, was that they failed to detach modern art from its associations with femininity and fashion. Stieglitz’s and Gallatin’s efforts notwithstanding, the promotion of modern art in New York was closely associated with women whose interests were in interior decoration. This association was strengthened in 1931 when the Whitney Museum of American Art opened its doors to the public on West 8th Street. Its galleries offered a series of individually decorated rooms with colour and furnishings tastefully balanced according to the latest fashions in interior design. Following a by then well-established pattern, the critic Helen Appleton Read drew a direct line between the appearance of the Whitney’s galleries and its woman founder’s personality: ‘Mrs Whitney’s sanctuary . . . is given a still more decisive personality by the installation.’⁵⁶ Evelyn Carol Hankins has argued persuasively that two factors came together in producing this kind of gendered perception of the Whitney’s galleries. First, it was not only founded by a wealthy woman, Gertrude Whitney, but also run by one, the formidable Juliana Force. Secondly, its luxuriously furnished rooms followed the latest fashions in interior design at a time when women had begun to dominate the profession of interior designers.⁵⁷

One of the important tasks that Barr set himself when he became the Museum of Modern Art’s first director was to move the appreciation of modern art away from such feminised associations. This he did partly by developing a mode of display that broke with the turn-of-the-century model of the fashionable interior then still prevailing in New York galleries (thus also breaking away from the influence of Justi). Secondly, he established the museum as a decidedly masculine initiative by representing its operations in terms of a business competing in the capitalist market.⁵⁸ In a letter to the trustees in 1933, Barr wrote: ‘consider the Museum entirely as a *business*. If the product is good its duplication and distribution can be endless’.⁵⁹ This was the language of the world that his trustees came from and they wholeheartedly supported his efforts. In the mid-1930s Nelson Rockefeller (his mother, the founder of MoMA, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, in contrast to the ladies at the Whitney, was careful only to wield power behind closed doors) commissioned an outside report on the museum in the manner of a company calling in a consulting firm. The report, written by Artemas Packard, Professor of Art at Dartmouth College, stated unambiguously that one of the challenges facing the museum was the fact that in America the interest in art ‘has been so largely cultivated hitherto as an interest peculiar to women’:

Indeed it may be said quite bluntly that no really significant development of contemporary art can take place in this country without the whole-hearted participation of men whose intimate relations with commerce, industry, and productive enterprise of all sorts makes them, rather than women, the immediate instruments for ‘applying the Arts to practical life’.⁶⁰

Packard recommended three ways in which this masculinisation of the arts could be accomplished. He endorsed a business-like running of the museum to distinguish it from the (implicitly amateur) female philanthropic cultivation of the arts. Further, he recommended

fostering a market for modern art, something that, he argued, would encourage those male collectors who hitherto had tended to concentrate on historical art. (Abby Rockefeller's interest in modern art, for example, was not shared by her husband, who preferred old masters and antique furnishings.)⁶¹ Finally, he highlighted German initiatives to link art and industry. Packard's report in fact did what most consultancies do: rather than advocating a complete change of direction, they highlight what the business is already doing well and invite it to strengthen this practice. Having been impressed with the way that the Bauhaus had put its art production in the service of industry, Barr had mapped out this course for the museum at its outset. In contrast to the perception of modern art as an extension of interior decoration, Barr started from a clear vision of modern art's role in relation to industrial production.

Since at least the time of Ruskin in the nineteenth century, critics and artists had seen the need for art to respond to the effects of industrialisation. This was also a central pre-occupation of Barr's. The subject of his Harvard doctorate was 'The Machine in Modern Art', and it led him to what he saw as the central issue of contemporary culture: modern industry and mechanisation. Barr, however, did not look to art as a source of ornamentation to disguise the brutality of the machine, neither did he advocate a return to a hand-craft tradition as had Ruskin and William Morris. Nor did he see art as providing a refuge or haven of intimacy from the forces of industrialism in the manner of the Secession movements *circa* 1900 (see Chapter Two). Nor, finally, did he set out to glorify the sensuous qualities of the machine age as had the Italian Futurists and, indeed, as his friend and colleague at the Museum of Modern Art, Philip Johnson, would do. Barr's approach was a formalist one: his idea was that art must help to establish a true *style* appropriate to life in that age. In the foreword to the catalogue for the *Machine Art* exhibition of 1934, he wrote memorably:

Today man is lost in the . . . treacherous wilderness of industrial and commercial civilization. On every hand machines literally multiply our difficulties and point our doom. If, to use L. P. Jack's phrase, we are to 'end the divorce' between our industry and our culture we must assimilate the machine aesthetically as well as economically. Not only must we bind Frankenstein – but we must make him beautiful.⁶²

It was this vision that underpinned his much-noticed and, for the time, radical move of extending the Museum of Modern Art's remit beyond the fine arts. In the planning stages of MoMA he sketched a vision for a museum that would extend itself over the whole of contemporary visual culture:

In time the Museum would probably expand beyond the narrow limits of painting and sculpture in order to include departments devoted to drawings, prints, and photography, typography, the arts of design in commerce and industry, architecture (a collection of *projets* and *maquettes*), stage designing, furniture and the decorative arts. Not the least important might be the *filmotek*, a library of films.⁶³

Although many of these departments were established in the first two decades – Architecture in 1932, Film in 1935, Photography in 1940, and briefly also Dance and Theatre,

which was abandoned in 1944 – Barr was unable to realise the programme in the museum's initial phase.⁶⁴ The trustees, he wrote later, believed that

the multidepartmental program was too ambitious and if announced might confuse or put off the public and our potential supporters and that anyway the committee was primarily interested in painting so that consideration of things as photography and furniture design would have to be indefinitely postponed.⁶⁵

Yet, despite Barr's ambitious vision for the scope of the museum, he never set out to challenge the boundaries between the different genres in the way that the Bauhaus or the Russian avant-garde had done.⁶⁶ For Barr, painting and sculpture remained privileged realms in which artists could experiment freely with the forms that would eventually influence the other visual media. The different departments of the museum were there to document that process.

Reaching out to a broader audience through educational activities had always been a particularly American contribution to the development of museology in the twentieth century.⁶⁷ Enterprises like those by John Cotton Dana at the Newark Museum in New Jersey and by Benjamin Ives Gilman at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston were much discussed in international museum circles, including the main German museum journal *Museumskunde*. Yet what was new at the Museum of Modern Art was that education was not simply grafted onto an exhibition but built into its very bones. From his first to his last exhibition, Barr conceived their themes in didactic terms that he spelt out in his extremely well-written and accessible publications. Furthermore, the works on show were always selected in order to make a point – rather than just to display the greatest works or to collect comprehensively.

Barr's conception dominated the Museum of Modern Art for a long time. In part, no doubt, this had to do with his personal qualities – his charm and Ivy League education gave him the confidence to talk as a social equal to the rich and powerful patrons who supported the museum and dominated its board of trustees. But Barr's vision was mainly successful because it represented modern art in a way that those patrons could accept.⁶⁸ As a source of forms for styles that would in due course become widespread across society, the artist related to society almost like an inventor or a product designer to an individual enterprise. In this way his (or more rarely, her) work could be appreciated as radical and innovative without being seen as threatening or subversive: a source of invention rather than an agent of social intervention. As we have already seen, Barr was comfortable using the language of business in describing the activity of the museum to its trustees. In an early confidential report he outlined his vision like the manager of a large company:

Analysis of the present organization of the Museum reveals two distinct types of work

1. 'Production.'

Basically, the Museum 'produces' art knowledge, criticism, scholarship, understanding, taste. This is its laboratory study work. . . . This preparation or 'production' work is the stuff of which the Museum's prestige is made.

2. 'Distribution.'

Once the product is made, the next job is its distribution. An exhibition in the galleries is distribution. Circulation of exhibition catalogues, memberships, publicity, radio, are all distribution.⁶⁹

Barr's statement did more, however, than address the trustees in language with which they were familiar. It tapped into the public concern for consumption and consumers that was part of the way in which the New Deal was groping for political and economic solutions to the Depression. In effect, the museum positioned itself as a mediator between industrial producers and distributors on the one hand and the buying public on the other. In that sense it was not greatly dissimilar to the growing profession of advertising, whose practitioners, although in the pay of manufacturers, claimed to serve the consuming public by supplying them with information to guide their choices.⁷⁰ Like them, MoMA packaged a given product, art, by producing knowledge, understanding and taste – and made sure it reached a wider public through distribution in galleries and exhibition catalogues, as well as through more conventional channels of publicity. In this way it aimed to turn spectators into educated consumers.

MoMA's Critics

The Museum of Modern Art's incredible success as an institution made it the target of critics from the very beginning. Some, like Kandinsky, as we have already seen, objected to the way in which Barr historicised an enterprise that they thought of as timeless and transcendental. But more forceful was the Marxist and neo-Marxist critique of the separation between art and its social origins.

One of the first to make such a criticism was the art historian Meyer Schapiro. In an article in the *Marxist Quarterly*, Schapiro took issue with Barr's understanding of art history as represented in the museum's exhibitions and catalogues.⁷¹ While Barr believed that artists took the leading role in forming the style of an age, Schapiro disagreed strongly. In Schapiro's view, artistic forms registered the impact of social experiences rather than merely developments within art itself. As far as Barr was concerned, however, society's influence on art's development was negative. In order to develop, he believed that art needed freedom from social pressure. He had spent a year in Stuttgart at the time when the Nazis came to power and had experienced the repression they imposed. Still under the influence of this haunting experience, Barr wrote in the catalogue for *Cubism and Abstract Art*: 'This essay and exhibition might well be dedicated to those painters of squares and circles (and the architects influenced by them) who have suffered at the hands of philistines with political power.'⁷²

Schapiro criticised the museum's presentation of art in isolation from the social world within which it had developed. The other side of the Marxist criticism, however, was that such a presentation of art had an ideological function within the capitalist world of twentieth-century North America.⁷³ Later critics therefore noted that Barr's belief in personal freedom as necessary for artistic development was congenial to the conception of individuality, creativity and freedom that the businessmen who were trustees of the museum

saw as prerequisites for a vigorous capitalist society. In the foreword to a guide to the collection, John Hay Whitney and Nelson A. Rockefeller expressed this with admirable clarity:

We believe that the collection of the Museum of Modern Art and this publication represent our respect for the individual and for his ability to contribute to society as a whole through the free use of his individual gifts in his individual manner. This freedom we believe fundamental to democratic society.⁷⁴

A further criticism of MoMA's ideological function emerged in the 1970s. Far from being a haven that held itself aloof from society, the Museum of Modern Art's vision, it was argued, played an important part in the self-assertion of the United States as leader of the liberal-democratic capitalist West before, during and after the Second World War.⁷⁵ In fact, on the occasion of the opening of the new museum building in 1939, a radio programme was broadcast live from the ceremony with a message from President Roosevelt himself. Speaking via a link from the White House, FDR endorsed the vision of art as an expression of liberalism that the museum had fostered since its foundation:

A world turned into stereotypes, a society converted into a regiment, a life translated into a routine make it difficult for either art or artists to survive, . . . Crush individuality in society and you crush art as well. Nourish the conditions of a free life and you nourish the arts, too. As in our democracy we enjoy the right to believe in different religious creeds or in none, so our American artists express themselves with complete freedom from the strictures of dead artistic tradition or political ideologies.⁷⁶

Given the moment in history – five months later German troops would invade Poland – Roosevelt's sense that free life was under threat is not surprising. What is notable, however, is that he, like Barr, presented art as being as valuable to a democracy as it was to the propaganda machines of the totalitarian states of Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. According to Roosevelt, it was through non-interference in the creative process that the arts would be most useful to society. In the same speech he declared: 'In encouraging the creation and enjoyment of beautiful things we are furthering democracy itself. That is why this Museum is a citadel of civilization.'

Schapiro criticised the museum's separation of art from the social world, while neo-Marxist writers focused on the museum's ideological function within a capitalist society. More than anything else, it was the Museum of Modern Art's conception of art galleries as enclosed spaces with neutral wall colourings – the 'white cube' – that became the target for both groups of Marxist critics. The artist and critic Brian O'Doherty, who coined the term 'white cube', criticised it both for its distance from the wider social world and for its economic consequences. First, the role of the white cube was to shut the world out in order to make the work inside appear to be eternal, he claimed:

A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have [*sic*] at the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, 'to take on its own

life'. . . Art exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of 'period' (late modern), there is no time.⁷⁷

O'Doherty described very vividly the white cube as part of a particular kind of aesthetic modernism – one that was self-referential and uninterested in social content. Secondly, he argued, the dissimulation of art's social role fulfilled, in reality, important economic functions in making art appear precious and scarce.⁷⁸

There is no doubt that such criticisms of the museum's display strategy were telling. Certainly, the Museum of Modern Art's exhibitions showed works of art predominantly against a white background and they were not presented in any kind of social and political context. It is also true that the Museum of Modern Art was keen not just to assert the importance of modern art but also to associate it with a vision of freedom and individuality that was congenial to the political self-assertion of the United States at the time. Finally, the museum was happy to represent itself as being in the 'culture business' and to treat its visitors as consumers. These were all consequences of the vision of the man who dominated the Museum of Modern Art for most of this period, Alfred Barr. Nevertheless, there was a significant difference between Barr's conception of the flexible white space and the 'white cube'. The aim of the white walls was to provide an adaptable, expandable series of spaces that could be brought together, not an enclosed and isolated cube as O'Doherty described.⁷⁹ Barr's vision, moreover, was not the only one in contention at MoMA.

Alternative Voices and Visions at the Museum of Modern Art

Barr's vision dominated the development of the Museum of Modern Art, decisively shaped its mode of displaying art and has been at the centre of subsequent discussions of the museum's significance. But his was not the only voice and it did not go uncontested. First, there were two other figures within the museum whose views left important traces in the 1930s: Nelson Rockefeller in his function as a trustee and Philip Johnson, who in 1932 was appointed the first curator of the Museum of Modern Art's newly created architecture department. Beyond that there was a group of people outside the museum whose alternative visions would also play a role at some stage in the life of the Museum of Modern Art, but did not deflect it from its general path. This included above all the philosopher John Dewey. Dewey's views on art formed the guiding principles on which the philanthropist Albert C. Barnes established the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia in 1922, and they played a powerful role in reshaping art education around the time of the Second World War. Dewey was also of great importance to the German museum director Alexander Dorner, after the latter had emigrated to the United States in 1937. Dorner, together with Walter Gropius, Herbert Bayer and other German émigrés from the Bauhaus, helped to produce an exhibition at the museum that was very different from the usual shows taking place there. Dewey and the Bauhaus émigrés held views that were at odds with Barr's, and this provided a contrast to the dominant thinking within the museum in the 1930s.

Nelson A. Rockefeller

Not unreasonably, given the way in which the Whitney and Guggenheim museums proudly bear the names of the families that endowed them, the Museum of Modern Art in New York has sometimes been called the 'Rockefeller Museum'. The Rockefellers had risen to the top of America's plutocracy only a generation previously, but by endowing the museum and securing it financially in its early years, they continued the tradition of private philanthropy that was responsible for most North American museums. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller was the leading light behind the museum's foundation, and her sons, Nelson and David, both became influential trustees.⁸⁰ During the 1930s, however, it was Nelson who exerted the greatest influence. He was perhaps the only person powerful enough to make important decisions regarding the museum that contradicted Barr. Nelson was appointed chairman of the finance committee in 1934 and became president five years later. Under his regime, the museum ran at a profit. The new building in 1939 was not only built on land owned by the Rockefellers but owed a great deal to Nelson's energetic use of his social connections to raise funds for it. At the opening, *Time* magazine reported:

The Rockefeller-sited Museum also acquired, for its tenth anniversary, a Rockefeller president: brisk, hefty, sunny Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller, 30-year-old second son of John D. Jr. As Treasurer of the Museum since 1937, Nelson raised the funds for the new building, on which only \$200,000 of \$2,000,000 remained last week unpaid.⁸¹

Despite his relative youth, Nelson Rockefeller was already an experienced corporate manager. He was president of the Rockefeller Center and director of one of his family's subsidiaries, Creole Petroleum Corporation. It was he, more than anybody, who applied business principles to the museum's management in an effort to increase its money-generating capacity and thus reduce its dependence on donations from the trustees (mainly his own family). According to Rockefeller, it was on his initiative that the museum introduced an entrance fee: 'People appreciate things for which they have to pay a small amount. I went back to the trustees of the museum and told them that something like that might be a good idea. They put it into effect, and it worked.'⁸² Most of all, Rockefeller ensured that MoMA would have an efficient publicity machine, appointing Monroe Wheeler as Director of Publications in 1933.

It was due to Rockefeller's clout that the President of the United States spoke via a radio link on the occasion of the opening of the new museum building in 1939. But this was only the beginning of an impressive campaign to raise the museum's profile. With the opening of the new building, the museum embarked on an aggressive drive to recruit members, advertising that among the advantages would be access to the elegant penthouse clubrooms, with a roof terrace and pleasant views over mid-town Manhattan.⁸³ There is no doubt that Rockefeller's business strategies paid off. In the first five years after the 1939 opening, attendance more than tripled, membership doubled and the publications department began to make a profit.⁸⁴ Yet as in any business that experiences rapid growth, some within the museum believed that this expansion came at a price – the sacrifice of quality.

Five days before the opening ceremony, Alfred Barr wrote to his former teacher at Harvard, Paul Sachs, a trustee of the museum:

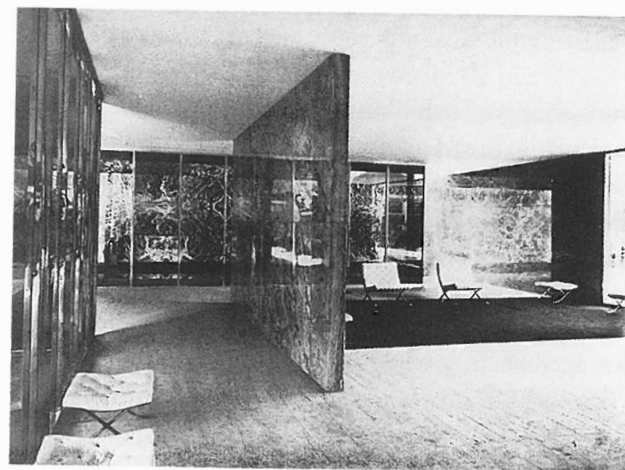
There have always been two theories as to how the Museum should exert its influence in New York and throughout the country. One theory holds that the appeal should be directly to the largest possible number of people. Another theory is that the Museum should appeal to a somewhat more limited public (I do not mean a snobbish or aristocratic minority) and in this way reach the great general public by means of work done to meet the most exacting standards of a minority. . . . but I am afraid that our incoming president [Nelson Rockefeller] may be under the influence of high-pressure from publicity and radio people who are more concerned with pleasing him than with understanding the representation of the museum. . . . As you know, some suggestion coming more or less from the outside is often ten times as effective as a long campaign carried on from within. I shall never forget what happened to the year-and-a-half's opposition to daylight on the south façade when you raised your voice against it at the last minute. It is amusing to read an account of the building now which describes how the architects had sought to admit as much daylight as possible.⁸⁵

Sachs intervened in support of Barr's position.⁸⁶ The issue was not whether MoMA had sold out to the principles of American corporate capitalism – the museum's loyalty to that cause was accepted by both parties – but whether the 'production' side of the museum's activity was being neglected in favour of the marketing side. What Barr feared was that the museum under Rockefeller was 'burning up' its product through an extravagant marketing campaign. In a letter to Sachs, thanking him for his intervention, he wrote: 'Our own sources of thought and information are gradually drying up. . . . I myself still have the feeling that I am coasting on the impetus of my few years' work in universities and colleges before coming to the Museum.'⁸⁷ Barr himself had courted media coverage from the beginning – he first employed a public relations firm in 1931 and he set up a radio broadcast at the time of the move to the 53rd Street building in 1932.⁸⁸ But the balance between distribution and the museum's production of quality research and exhibitions was tilting decidedly in the direction of the former – and to Barr's detriment. A major part of his value to the museum had always been his art historical knowledge, yet this was now becoming an increasingly marginal part of its activity. During the war years when the museum positioned itself as a 'weapon of national defence' (in the words of the president at the time, John Hay Whitney),⁸⁹ Rockefeller inspired an efficiency drive by the chairman of the board of trustees, Stephen Clark, which resulted in Barr's demotion to mere researcher in 1943.⁹⁰ Fortunately for the museum, however, Barr could not be marginalised so easily, and in 1947 he was reinstated as Director of Collections. As the museum wound down its wartime national defence programme, Barr's fine art exhibitions and publications regained their influence. Rightly, it is Barr's legacy that is now regarded as making the Museum of Modern Art distinctive in relation to both the collection and its display.

Philip Johnson

At a time when Barr was still displaying art in a relatively conventional manner, it was Philip Johnson who first put on an exhibition at MoMA that was radically innovative both in subject

matter and in its form of display. His colourful and sensual mode of display initiated a very popular current that continued to run in parallel to Barr's idiom of the white flexible container for the first two decades of the museum's existence – although it failed to have the same enduring impact.⁹¹ Barr and Johnson had met in 1929, shortly before Barr was appointed director of the Museum of Modern Art. Johnson, then still a classics student at Harvard, although with a newly developed interest in modern architecture, was at a low point in his life. His contact with Barr gave him the sense of purpose he was missing. Barr was crucial in planning Johnson's trip to Germany in 1929, from which he returned as one of the best-informed advocates of Bauhaus architecture.⁹² Only a year later Johnson was back in Germany, this time together with Barr and the only other American who knew more about modern architecture than either of them. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr's book *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (1929) had given the American public its first comprehensive introduction to European modernism in the field.⁹³ On their trip to Europe, Hitchcock and Johnson were busy assembling material for an architecture exhibition at the museum that would open in 1932. Johnson had hoped to commission Mies van der Rohe to undertake its installation. He had seen and been much impressed by Mies's design for the building materials exhibition *Deutsche Bauausstellung*, done in collaboration with Lilly Reich in Berlin in the summer of 1931 (see Chapter Three). 'Here', he wrote in a review for the *New York Times*, 'the art of exhibition' was turned into 'a branch of architecture'.⁹⁴ As in all their exhibitions, Mies and Reich had designed a spatially irregular and dynamic environment 'instead of the usual long central hall, with exhibits placed side by side'.⁹⁵ Moreover, Reich, as we have already seen, had arranged a display of building materials on the internal balcony that showed her unique talent for bringing out the sensual qualities of the most basic materials (see pl. 66). Since the time of their collaboration on the German Pavilion at the *International Exhibition* in Barcelona of 1929, Mies and Reich had perfected the creation of a series of spaces defined by shifting relationships between material and architectural elements that made an immediate sensual impact (pl. 90).

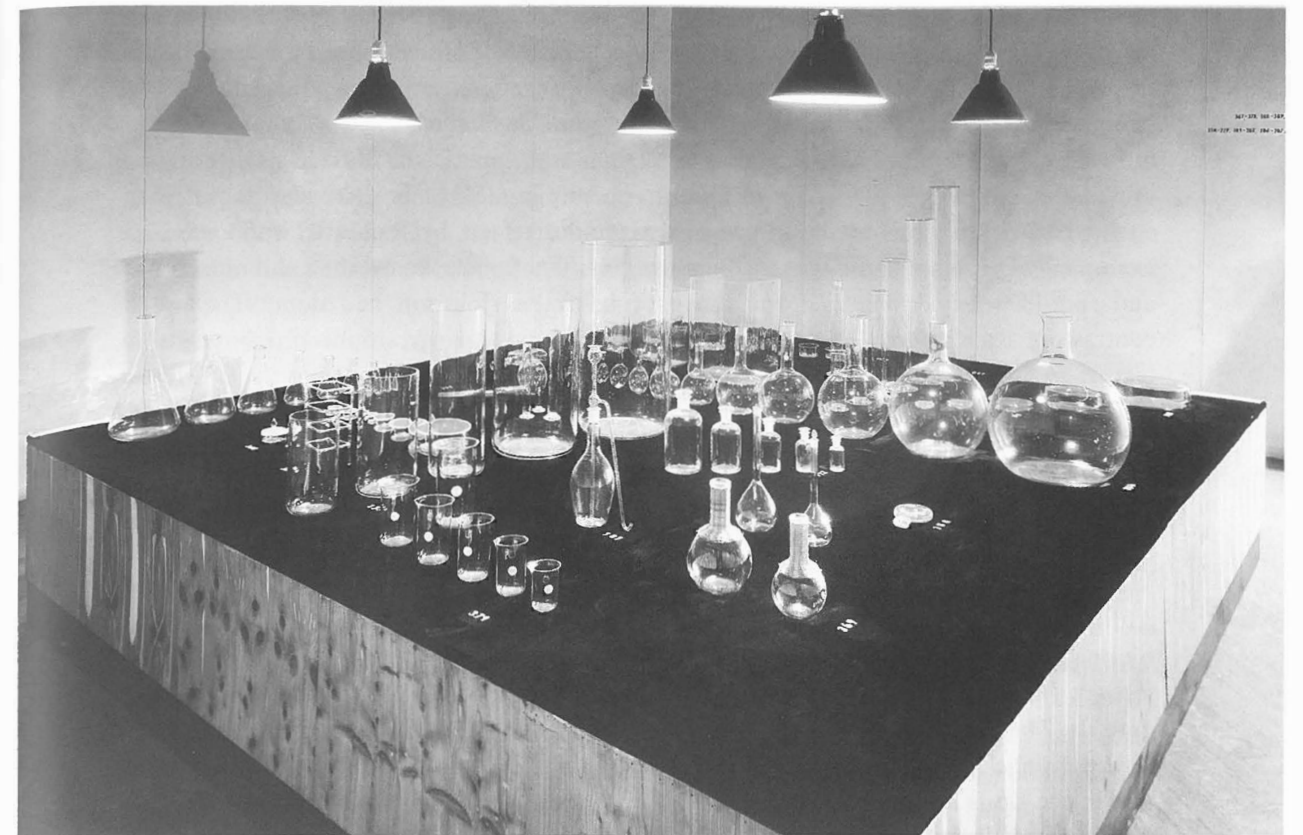


90 Mies van der Rohe, interior view of the German Pavilion at the *International Exhibition* in Barcelona, 1929. From Heinz Rasch and Bodo Rasch, *Zu, offen: Türen und Fenster* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1931), p. 68.



91 Philip Johnson, display of machine parts in the *Machine Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1934.

Johnson was smitten and brought this mode of exhibiting to New York, and to great acclaim. It found its most stunning expression in the *Machine Art* exhibition of 1934, whose rich visual and tactile contrasts evoked a sensuality that was much appreciated in the press.⁹⁶ The exhibition contained not one work of art or architecture, but, as in Mies's and Reich's projects, building materials and consumer products. What made the exhibition so extraordinary was that these mundane objects were displayed like artworks in a gallery. Johnson took machine parts such as springs and cylinders, objects such as disk lamps, and consumer items such as vases and arranged them artfully in front of screens of various colours and textures. In contrast to Mies and Reich, who despite their emphasis on sensuality always highlighted functionality too, Johnson's aim was solely to show 'the beauty of the machine and of the objects produced by it'.⁹⁷ This is obvious on the ground floor where



92 Philip Johnson, display of glass in the *Machine Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1934.

the broken tile floor of the Rockefeller townhouse contrasts with the shiny machine parts displayed on plinths like precious sculptures and set off by walls of white, pale blue, pink or grey (pl. 91).⁹⁸ In one room Johnson dimmed the light dramatically, so that the various glass items on display shone mysteriously on a black velvet table, lit by low-hanging ceiling lights (pl. 92). Arranging objects in a long series was a technique that Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Bayer had used to great effect in the display of German products at the Paris exhibition of 1930. While it gave their display a sense of graphical rhythm, it was principally a way of emphasising the mass-produced nature of modern consumables. In New York, however, Johnson simply used it to stunning aesthetic effect.

Machine Art was originally (not surprisingly, given his research interests) Barr's idea.⁹⁹ For Barr, the importance of the exhibition lay in the fact that it was to make the products of the machine aesthetically amenable.¹⁰⁰ But, as it turned out, Johnson's exhibition was rather different. His friend, the critic Helen Appleton Read, probably came closest to expressing Johnson's own intentions when she wrote of *Machine Art*: 'Atavistic emotions are stirred by the precise, shining, geometric shapes of the spheres, cubes and cylinders

of metal and glass.¹⁰¹ It was also Helen Appleton Read who took Johnson to a Nazi rally in Berlin in 1932. It made a great impact on him. He was deeply struck by the precision, force and geometry of the formations on view and saw it as an aesthetic event of the first importance.¹⁰² Indeed, shortly after the *Machine Art* show, Johnson left the museum to pursue an ill-advised career as a right-wing politician. *Machine Art*, however, initiated an exhibition style that was used frequently in MoMA's first decades. It was often employed in exhibitions of non-European art and artefacts by René d'Harnoncourt, for example.¹⁰³ D'Harnoncourt also used coloured walls, often darkened the exhibition rooms and spot-lit selected objects from above or below, as Johnson had done. The use of contrasting backgrounds and textures in the exhibition also continued to be a strong feature in MoMA's popular design shows, such as Edgar J. Kaufmann, Jr's *Useful Household Objects under \$5* of 1938 and Eliot Noyes's *Organic Design in Home Furnishing* of 1941.

John Dewey

Although it looked very different from the display idiom developed by Barr, Johnson's exhibition style was equally accommodating to the idea of the spectator as educated consumer. Indeed, Johnson himself first blurred the boundaries between shop and gallery when he gave the *Machine Art* exhibition the explicit purpose of serving 'as a practical guide to the buying public'.¹⁰⁴ There were to be no objects in the show not readily available and for sale in the United States.¹⁰⁵ Yet a different conception of art spectatorship was developing in the United States at this time, one that fell somewhere between the museum's notion of the spectator-as-consumer and the Constructivists' collectivist vision. This was a twentieth-century version of the nineteenth-century ideal of the viewer as responsible citizen, and its champion was the pragmatist philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey, who taught at Columbia University. Dewey's notion of *Art as Experience* (the title of a book published by Dewey in 1934) became popular among progressive educationalists in the late 1930s.¹⁰⁶ It found its way into MoMA in 1937 when a separate educational department was established, headed by Victor E. D'Amico.¹⁰⁷ D'Amico shared Dewey's belief that the experience of art should be a participatory activity. Thus, visitors were encouraged to make works themselves rather than merely enjoy or judge what they saw.

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey put forward an understanding of art as an emancipatory activity that fostered political participation in a democratic society. According to Dewey, art plays a liberating role in social and cultural transformations, but this was impeded by the separation of art into institutions like the Museum of Modern Art: 'Our present museums and galleries to which works of fine art are removed and stored', he wrote, 'illustrate some of the causes that have operated to segregate art instead of finding it an attendant of temple, forum, and other forms of associated life.'¹⁰⁸ According to Dewey, the growth of consumer capitalism promoted 'the idea that they [the museums] are apart from the common life'.¹⁰⁹ Like the '*nouveaux riches*, who are an important by-product of the capitalist system... communities and nations put their cultural good taste in evi-

dence by building opera houses, galleries, and museums'.¹¹⁰ Moreover, museums foster an acquisitive attitude among the viewers that Dewey considered to be fundamentally opposed to emancipatory spectatorship: a mode of viewing that gave people the experience of freedom and self-determination. In contrast to the values of the super-rich men and women who financed MoMA and dominated its trustees, Dewey championed a form of social capitalism that would be less directed towards the increase of consumption than to the promotion of voluntary associations between responsible individuals.¹¹¹ Only where there were free and fully rounded individuals could there be, in his view, a just form of capitalism.¹¹²

'Commerce itself', he wrote,

let us dare to say it, is a noble thing. It is intercourse, exchange, communication, distribution, sharing of what is otherwise secluded and private. Commercialism like all isms is evil. That we have not as yet released commerce from bondage to private interests is proof of the solidity and tenacity of our European heritage.¹¹³

He rejected contemplative art experience. The experience of art was valuable only in so far as it shunned the passive notion of spectatorship in favour of a more active engagement, recreating and responding productively to what was given. The experience he valued was a fully embodied one, not something that could be expressed in Barr-like charts and narratives of development.¹¹⁴ Given this fundamental difference of approach, D'Amico's attempts to introduce Dewey's notion of art experience into the museum were confined to the Education Department and had no impact on the main exhibition programme or the mode of display employed by the museum on its main floors. In one respect, however, Dewey's ideal art spectator shared common ground with the dominant model installed at the Museum of Modern Art, since for Dewey, too, there was no question that art experience was at its best when it heightened a sense of individuality.

The German Emigrés

Dewey's active conception of spectatorship had parallels to that of Alexander Dorner, who arrived in the United States in 1937, having been forced out of his museum directorship in Hanover by the Nazis.¹¹⁵ Dorner had been extremely receptive to the avant-garde exhibition experiments of the 1920s. He was, as we saw in Chapter Three, instrumental in bringing into being El Lissitzky's 'Abstract Cabinet', the most successful articulation of an active conception of gallery spectatorship. But there was a crucial difference: while Dewey was committed to the central importance of individuality, the German avant-garde émigrés in the United States continued to promote a more collectivist conception of experience. This found its way into the Museum of Modern Art in 1938 when Dorner and other German émigrés were given the opportunity to stage a Bauhaus exhibition there.

Dorner discovered Dewey's pragmatism for himself in the early 1940s.¹¹⁶ Pragmatism, as he wrote in his book *The Way Beyond 'Art'* (1947), offered him 'a helping hand' in trying to conceive life not in terms of immutable ideas but as 'a never resting interpen-

tration of energies which results in their constant self-transformation'.¹¹⁷ Dorner's Hanover installations of atmospheric rooms in which the viewers would experience art history through their senses – viscerally, so to speak – already had a strong resemblance to Dewey's conception of embodied aesthetic perception. Dewey himself recognised this relationship in his generous foreword to Dorner's book: 'We have an underlying community of belief as to things common to artistic creation and appreciation and to all other vitally significant phases of human life.'¹¹⁸ Dorner, like Dewey, believed in a form of social capitalism as a privileged mechanism for the free interaction between people; but in contrast to Dewey, Dorner thought that this relationship could transcend individuality. What this meant for Dorner in the 1940s was something different from the communist understanding of collectivity that he had once admired in Lissitzky's conception for the 'Abstract Cabinet'. Instead, he now spoke enthusiastically of efficiently functional human beings who adapted quickly to their environment and acted as nodal points within an overarching network of information and exchange:

There has developed within capitalism a new and more efficient species of mind to replace the old autonomous 'I,' and that species sees deeper and plans farther ahead. The final ground is no longer the autonomous individual but an interpenetrative collaboration of all individuals to dissolve autonomy.¹¹⁹

This transformation of an earlier revolutionary vision into an endorsement of an idealised form of American capitalist democracy was something that Dorner had in common with several of the Bauhaus émigrés, most prominently Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer.

Moholy-Nagy, whose *Room of Our Time* was never fully realised in Hanover, was able to escape the Nazi persecution of modern artists in 1934, moving first to Amsterdam and then to London. He arrived in the United States in 1937 to head a design school in Chicago that had been developed along the lines of the Bauhaus curriculum.¹²⁰ Relying on corporate money to keep the school running, Moholy-Nagy increasingly abandoned the more radical elements of his pedagogical programme, aligning himself with 'the new managerialism of the ascendant American business culture', as Joan Ockman has put it.¹²¹ There is a proposal among Barr's papers in the Museum of Modern Art Archives in New York, in which Moholy-Nagy offers the school's services to the museum's wartime programme.¹²² Entitled 'New Approach to Occupational Therapy', Moholy-Nagy proposes that the school's Bauhaus-derived teaching methods with their focus on sensory experience would be ideally placed to play a role in rehabilitation efforts for disabled veterans.¹²³ The goal was no longer, as it had been in 1925, to create a new human being with an expanded vision,¹²⁴ but to 'restore the patient physically and psychologically to the *previous* level of his normal status' and 'to rise *beyond* it to a higher efficiency and higher production level'.¹²⁵ In his proposal, Moholy-Nagy envisages the application of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth's time and motion studies, originally designed to improve the efficiency of workers in mass production, to art therapy.

Frederic J. Schwartz has drawn attention to the way in which a technocratic, stimulus-response understanding of human beings, already current among the Weimar avant-garde, lent itself to the agendas of those with an interest in manipulating people.¹²⁶ Initially,

Herbert Bayer had no difficulty in offering his services to the new regime in Germany (see Chapter Three). The ease, however, with which the technocratic, stimulus-response model travelled to the United States should alert us to its equal usefulness to consumer capitalism.¹²⁷ Indeed, it was here that it was to prove ultimately more productive – by 1937 Bayer had difficulty in finding work in Germany. Although Bayer's advertising imagery of the 1930s often made use of classical statues and evoked an organic conception of man and society that was congenial to the Nazis, the dynamism implicit in his designs was increasingly at odds with the prevailing climate, and after the opening of the *Degenerate Art* exhibition in 1937 he made plans to leave the country.¹²⁸ As we have seen, the Nazis' own exhibition designs began to favour more static and hierarchical arrangements. In the United States, Bayer now positioned himself not as someone whose design offered a new vision for a new society but simply as a skilled professional who had mastered the techniques of persuasion. He began to abandon the emphasis on argument in his exhibition designs in favour of a much more seductive style of display. Where the viewers had been left to seek a line of argument for themselves (for example, by choosing between a panoramic or close-up view; see Chapter Three), they were now to be led, as Bayer stated himself, 'to a planned and direct reaction' as envisaged in the psychology of advertising.¹²⁹ Bayer was the artist Dorner championed most after his arrival in the United States.¹³⁰ Scholars have argued that Dorner was misguided in adopting Bayer as the exemplary artist for what he saw as the new democratic spirit of capitalism, and that education – so crucial to Dorner – became mere manipulation in Bayer's hands.¹³¹ Yet Dorner found many of his own fundamental convictions expressed in Bayer's exhibition design, not least the vision of spectators as functional elements in a self-regulating system.

The Bauhaus Exhibition of 1938

The German émigrés' conception of the spectator as a de-individualised functional element could not have been further from the Museum of Modern Art's dominant vision of consumer-oriented individualism. Not surprisingly, then, an attempt to articulate it there failed disastrously. The arrival in the United States in the late 1930s of a number of the most important members of the Bauhaus made very compelling the idea of an exhibition about that institution which had left such a powerful impression on the young Barr. The show was to be the last in the museum's temporary home in the concourse galleries of the Rockefeller Center before the opening of the new building on 53rd Street. Doubtless in Barr's own mind the exhibition was intended to prepare the ground for the new museum building, whose style would owe a great deal to the Bauhaus tradition. Busy with the planning of the new building and in making preparations for its ambitious opening show, Barr handed the organisation of the Bauhaus exhibition to the group of former Bauhaus members that was then coming together in New England. In March 1937 Walter Gropius had taken up a position as professor at the Harvard School of Architecture. That summer, a week after Dorner arrived in New York, Gropius invited him along with Bayer, Marcel Breuer, Alexander Schawinski and Josef Albers to Marion on Cape Cod to work on the

exhibition.¹³² When the exhibition *Bauhaus, 1919–1928* opened on 7 December 1938 it was, however, largely the product of Bayer's work in collaboration with the museum's curator of architecture, John McAndrew, Philip Johnson's successor.¹³³ Bayer was the only one of the collaborators still able and willing to return to Germany to assemble material, and he was keen to establish himself as an exhibition designer in the United States. Barr, Dorner and Gropius did little more than write articles for the catalogue.¹³⁴

To mount such an exhibition at all was a heroic undertaking, its subsequent failure with the public notwithstanding. Bayer's efforts to obtain material for the exhibition was a dispiriting travail, and the letters in MoMA's Archives written in response to Bayer's requests are testimony to the great despair that governed the thoughts of so many individuals at the time. Many of those in Germany with whom Bayer made contact were afraid of the consequences of contributing to an American exhibition about an institution that Hitler had closed, while some of those in exile, like Kandinsky, could lay their hands on virtually nothing of their Bauhaus work.¹³⁵ Yet others, like Wilhelm Wagenfeld, had changed sides politically. In a letter to Bayer written in November 1937, Wagenfeld declined to participate because he feared that his designs would be stolen in the United States where, he said, the Jews were working actively against Germany.¹³⁶ Thus, as Bayer wrote to Gropius in February 1938, the picture that they could give was only very partial at best, since, for one reason or another, so many of their former colleagues and students now denied their past enthusiasm for the Bauhaus.¹³⁷

Nonetheless, Bayer was a master at arranging compelling exhibitions without having visually attractive objects to show (see pl. 63). The absence of many Bauhaus-designed objects was compensated for by the use of photographs. A similar dependence on photography had been no obstacle to the success of the modern architecture exhibition that Philip Johnson had curated in 1932, but, while Johnson's exhibition followed the format of Barr's painting shows, for the Bauhaus exhibition Bayer created a complex environment in the concourse galleries of the Rockefeller Center that was intended, in Dorner's words, 'to detach exhibition design from the static wall surface and to dissolve the traditional three-dimensional "room" by creating new relations with divisions, penetrations and interactions'.¹³⁸ *Bauhaus, 1919–1928* first confronted the viewer with a large model of Gropius's building in Dessau. A curved wall of corrugated paper slenderly suspended on white wooden posts divided the exit room from the entrance and at the same time gave visual expression to Bayer's dynamic and interpenetrating conception of space (pl. 93). In the foyer a programmatic text was fixed at the centre of a convex red wall that gave a brief history of the Bauhaus and its curriculum and made the point that the Bauhaus was more than a school of art; it was a social experiment:

The Idea of the Bauhaus:

The primary aim of the Bauhaus was to train a new type of man who should combine imaginative design with technical proficiency.¹³⁹

Behind this wall text was a door to a small windowless space in which visitors found the Bauhaus curriculum represented symbolically on the wall. Titled 'The Bauhaus Synthesis', the viewer saw to the left a large egg, in the middle a hand and to the right a transparent



93 Herbert Bayer, display of Bauhaus work at the *Bauhaus, 1919–1928* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1938.

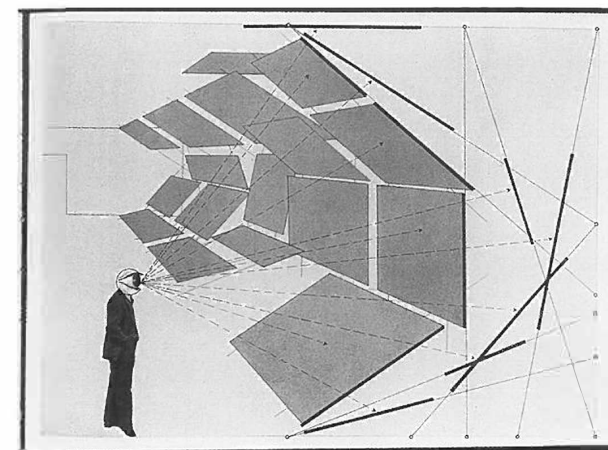
cube. The egg was said to symbolise the preliminary courses devoted to the study of form, space, colour and materials, the hand the practical training in the various workshops, and the cube the study's culmination in actual architecture and design. The egg bore the title 'mastery of form', the palm 'skill of the hand' and the cube 'mastery of space'.¹⁴⁰ In the doorway to the first room was suspended a reproduction of Lyonel Feininger's wood engraving *Cathedral of Socialism*, which had appeared on the first Bauhaus manifesto of 1919. Sparse but concise, the entrance hall was designed to make the theme of the exhibition explicit. At the time, when he was installing the show, Bayer wrote an article on exhibition design in which he asserted that 'the object to be represented should not simply be shown and exhibited in the old museum sense. The essence of the present-day concept follows: the theme must be clearly expressed'.¹⁴¹

Clearly, what the former Bauhaus members saw as the theme of the exhibition was radically different from MoMA's usual approach. Gropius had always vehemently rejected the designation of the Bauhaus as a 'style' in Barr's formalist sense and fought to establish its identity as a reform movement.¹⁴² While MoMA's visitors were accustomed to being given lessons in style and taste, here they were confronted with the record of a social experiment. In the next room they saw photographs and models of the work carried out in the pre-



94 Herbert Bayer, display of work by the Bauhaus theatre workshop at the *Bauhaus, 1919-1928* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1938.

liminary course, photographs and samples of the products created in the various workshops, and, finally, work produced in the schools established in America in the tradition of the Bauhaus (primarily Albers's at Black Mountain College and Moholy-Nagy's at Chicago). Moreover, this work was displayed in a manner that, in Bayer's words, did not 'retain its distance from the spectator' but was 'brought close to him, [in order that it should] penetrate and leave an impression on him, should explain, demonstrate, and even persuade and lead him to a planned and direct reaction'.¹⁴³ To this end, all the two-dimensional wall panels were irregularly displayed and tilted at various angles. Although the concourse galleries consisted of a series of different rooms, Bayer tried to cut through their separation by establishing a continuous and dynamic flow with footprints and direc-



95 Herbert Bayer, diagram of a spectator in an exhibition, 1930. From *Section Allemande: Exposition de la Société des Artistes décorateurs*, exh. cat., Grand Palais, Paris (Berlin: Hermann Reckendorf, 1930), n. p.

tional shapes on the floor. Installations, too, like tables suspended with wires from the ceiling, were used to intercut between discreet rooms to create the effect of 'interpenetration and intersection'.¹⁴⁴ In order to draw the viewer in, Bayer used his peephole technique in the section devoted to the theatre workshop (pl. 94). Here visitors could see a display of dramatically lit figurines from Oskar Schlemmer's 'Triadic Ballet' rotating.

Nothing in this show catered to the vision of spectatorship that MoMA had been cultivating for the previous ten years. Here was no lesson in style or taste that could be quietly absorbed by a contemplative spectator. Yet, however dynamic and active the viewers had to be in Bayer's *Bauhaus, 1919-1928* exhibition, they were not addressed as rational and responsible human beings invited to make up their own mind, in the manner of Bayer's earlier exhibitions. Rather, the spectator was led to 'a planned and direct reaction'. The footprints prescribed the route through the show and the weaving in and out of closed rooms allowed the visitors little independence in the way in which they assimilated it. In the catalogue for the exhibition and again in his article, Bayer reproduced the image of the field of vision of an exhibition spectator that he had developed for the Paris exhibition catalogue of 1930 and expanded in 1935 (pl. 95). A male viewer is represented at a single moment, raised on a platform surrounded by panels on all sides (including on the ceiling and the floor). His line of view is indicated by straight arrows that signal the turn of the head. All eye and no head, the viewer is given little leeway to construct his own path and mode of engagement with the exhibits. Bayer's spectators become the de-individualised human beings that Dörner had championed, people whose value can no longer be assessed 'apart from an energetic process which consists in a continual "give and take," and "acting and being acted upon"' – in short a mere effect of the dynamic processes around them.¹⁴⁵ There is as little room for a rational and independently thinking person as there is for the kind of meaningful sensual experience of individual fulfilment that Dewey prescribed. But it was for different reasons that the show was fiercely criticised in the press. It was called 'clumsily installed', 'voluminously inarticulate' and, most of all, 'confusing'.¹⁴⁶ At stake here

was a clash between what people had come to expect in the museum and the émigrés' vision of an efficient and collectively integrated modern human being – something that was incomprehensible to the public in New York in 1938. It was the most expensive exhibition in the history of the museum so far, and also its greatest disaster.

Interestingly, however, Bayer's new idea of the functionally integrated spectator proved briefly useful to the museum later on, when it moved into outright propaganda shows upon the United States' entry into the Second World War. These shows have received a fair amount of attention.¹⁴⁷ They ranged from *The Road to Victory* in 1942, an exhibition that told the story of the development of America into the country ideally placed to fight fascism, to the photography exhibition *The Family of Man* in the 1950s, which Roland Barthes made famous in his *Mythologies*.¹⁴⁸ For several of these shows, including *The Road to Victory* (but not *The Family of Man*), Bayer was recruited to create unusual and dynamic installations. Even more than in the Bauhaus exhibition, he reduced the visual elements in the displays to large photographs that surrounded the viewer on all sides. No critical distance was allowed, because the visitor's route was tightly channelled through a maze of visually compelling photographs. Dorner recalled in relation to *The Road to Victory*:

The whole exhibition was one gigantic photomontage rising up in the spectator's mind as he walked along. The pictures and the ideas and activities they represented interpenetrated in the minds of the visitors, interacting and creating associations and spontaneous reactions. The visitor was led from one such reaction to another and finally to the climatic reaction of intense sympathy with the life of the USA and an ardent wish to help it and share its aims. One entirely forgot that one was in an exhibition.¹⁴⁹

These exhibitions were the outcome of the museum's effort to contribute to the national defence effort during the war and after. In this way they reflected the connection that existed between the leading figures of the museum and the US government during those years – most notably, Nelson Rockefeller, who had temporarily left his post as president of the museum to become Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.¹⁵⁰ Yet these innovative propaganda shows were no more than detours from the exhibition mode established by Barr, which came to dominate MoMA's practices once again in the 1950s. While its visitors could understand the place of propaganda at a time of war and seemed to have accepted manipulation in such shows, they clearly were not prepared for it in 1938. Bayer's radical experimentation in *Bauhaus, 1919–1928* was too far removed from the mode of viewing that MoMA had established in its first decade and which found its perfect space of experience in the white flexible container that became the museum's best-known exhibition idiom.

Fully Fledged Members of the Consumer's Republic

In contrast to Dewey's model of an emancipated, participatory viewer and the German émigrés' reduction of individuals to functional elements, MoMA's envisaged spectators were sophisticated and informed consumers. Just such ideal visitors appeared in extensive spreads



96 Fashion shot in the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1939. From *Vogue*, 15 July 1939, p. 25.

in *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* and other fashion magazines in July and August 1939. On the occasion of the opening of the Goodwin and Stone building, the magazines published glossy fashion spreads that had been shot inside the museum. A model holding a catalogue in her hand, posed, for example, on the museum's staircase in a 'dinner dress of black satin, topped with Daniel Boone furs'. She was said to be 'in harmony with the "Art in Our Time"'.¹⁵¹ Another model, slim and dressed in an exquisitely embroidered Schiaparelli tunic dress, pinched in at the waist, echoed perfectly the form of Brancusi's shiny bronze *Bird in Space*. Two somewhat more curvaceous women in the sculpture garden, wearing elegant tweed jackets and skirts, appear more in tune with Laichaise's bulbous bronze nude that is poised in front of them (pl. 96).¹⁵² In this idealised world, the museum's visitors were not only consumers but also taste-makers – fully fledged citizens of the Consumers' Republic.



5 The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum

Showing Art at the End of the Twentieth Century

The search for ways to revitalise the market economy was as important in Western Europe after the end of the Second World War as it had been in the United States in the 1930s. This chapter will start by focusing on Western Germany, where material affluence and consumerist dreams carried special symbolic weight in the immediate post-war years.¹ It was not in a museum, but in a series of exhibitions that a particularly successful contemporary model of spectatorship was developed during those years. The *Documenta*,² as this series was called, is still going strong after fifty years, taking place every four or five years in the town of Kassel under a different director each time. Its goal is to give a global survey of recent developments in art, independent of issues of national representation (in contrast to its closest European competitor, the Venice Biennale).³

From the point of view of this book, the *Documenta* was innovative in two important respects. First, there was the organisers' decision to reject the format of an established art gallery with its own permanent collection in favour of what they called a 'Museum of 100 Days'.⁴ This was a radical response to a problem that had long beset galleries of contemporary art: how to stay at the forefront of artistic development.⁵ In order to remain focused on the most recent developments, the *Documenta* was designed as a series of temporary exhibitions that would nonetheless achieve an institutional quality by taking place at regular intervals in the same location. A major consequence of this decision was to move the experience of art reception towards an event culture, part of whose appeal lies precisely in its temporary, festival atmosphere. Moreover, the temporal structure of the reception of art is changed radically. Instead of being able to have repeated encounters with individual works, as in a permanent collection in a large city where visitors can return over weeks, months or even years, visitors to the *Documenta* rarely have more than a day to spend there. Thus they know in advance that their experience is short-lived and non-repeatable. Yet clearly this has not undermined the appeal of the experience for the modern spectator. On the contrary, such has been the success of events like the *Documenta* that today temporary exhibitions play a central role in almost all art galleries, and even their permanent collections are frequently rearranged.⁶

A second crucial innovation was the way in which the *Documenta* moved the presentation of art into the foreground with a series of radical and unexpected display strategies. The *Documenta* became the forerunner of an exhibition culture in which the curator is the greatest hero of the show.⁷ The early *Documenta* shows were celebrated for their unusual and aesthetically attractive mises-en-scène. As I will explain in the second part of this chapter, many artists reacted to this new curatorial emphasis on the mode of exhibition by producing room installations themselves. In response, contemporary art museums became blander and blander in order to be able to house the artists' environments. The enormous explosion in museum-building that started at the end of the twentieth century has brought great architectural variety to the exterior of these buildings but no comparable diversity on the inside. It is not only in Bilbao, London and New York (the examples that will be discussed here) that the white dynamic spaces pioneered by MoMA still dominate. But since they have not changed, the ideal of the consumer-spectator has not yet been seriously challenged.

Like a Phoenix out of the Ashes: The *Documenta* in 1955

Ten years after the Second World War, Kassel, a once-prosperous seat of royalty and later an industrial centre, was still largely in ruins (pl. 97). It had been heavily bombed in the war and was now cut off from its hinterland by the new border with East Germany. As a result, it found itself left behind by the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the economic boom that was reviving the German economy in the 1950s. Nevertheless, this provincial backwater was to become the site for the most important series of international contemporary art events of the post-war era.

The establishment of the *Documenta* in Kassel is to be explained partly as a response to political and social factors operating at the time, but it also owed a great deal to the drive and initiative of one man, the designer Arnold Bode, a native of Kassel who was teaching at the local art college during this period.⁸ In 1955 Kassel had been chosen to host the National Garden Festival, the second city to organise this significant national event after the war. The selection of Kassel for the Garden Festival was a consciously symbolic gesture, intended to signify, in the words of the West German president, Theodor Heuss, that 'a damaged or endangered community can make a recovery'.⁹ Bode saw the Garden Festival as a chance to organise an art exhibition. An early manuscript note by him makes it clear that he intended this exhibition as a further demonstration of Germany's successful rebirth after the devastations of the Nazi years. Furthermore, Bode argued, it would signal the country's cultural integration into Europe, not least to those other Germans who now found themselves in a different state:

it is worth promoting – and important to promote – the idea of a common European form of art as part of the Europe movement. Kassel is the German city that is predestined for an exhibition like this. Kassel is close to the East German border, was largely destroyed, and has been very actively reconstructed. It is an exemplary deed to manifest the idea of Europe in an art exhibition thirty kilometres from the East German border.¹⁰



97 The ruins of the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, 1945.

To talk about promoting West Germany's cultural reintegration into Western Europe was by no means a politically innocent stance to take at a time when the Soviet Union was still actively campaigning for a disarmed, united Germany, outside the Western bloc. After 1945 the centre-right, led by the chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, were strong advocates of Western European integration, while the Social Democrats under Kurt Schumacher appealed to nationalist sentiment in campaigning for German reunification.¹¹ The *Documenta*, however, was a huge success from the start. After the war there were 71,000 inhabitants in Kassel, but 130,000 people visited the first exhibition (instead of the 50,000 that had been expected).

The Museum Fridericianum, a neo-classical eighteenth-century building in the centre of town, had not been fully renovated when the first *Documenta* opened on 16 July 1955. The unplastered brick walls were whitewashed while the gutted interior was divided by partitions and hung with milky white plastic curtains that both covered the windows and provided a backdrop for the paintings and sculptures. The sense of flowing lightness was enhanced by mounting the paintings on free-standing slender metal frames that hovered in front of the brick walls (pl. 7). The way in which the show was installed appeared so fresh and new, combining the old museum ruin with very recent interior decoration materials, that contemporary critics greeted the display as a new style in its own right, one that captured the *Zeitgeist* just as much if not more than the work on display.¹²

By whitewashing the brick walls of a war-damaged museum ruin – a physical reminder of the dreadful consequences of the German nation's immediate past – in a manner that signalled a rebirth out of the wreckage of the old, the *Documenta* helped people to forget the Nazi past. Its event-like character and stylish interiors promoted a vision of art reception as a source that could inspire a modern, forward-looking Western lifestyle. The *Documenta* played an important part in the seamless shift from the political idols of the Nazi years to the idols of the marketplace in West German culture after the war.¹³

A Symbolic Rebirth

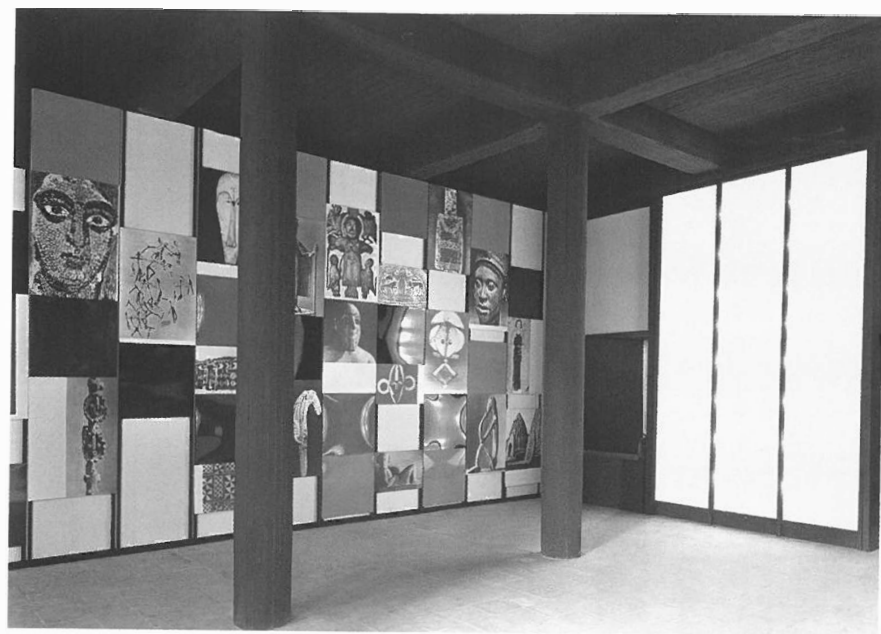
The staging of the first *Documenta* clearly signalled to its visitors (by far the majority of whom were German) that the country had risen from the ashes of the past. The works hung and hovered in front of the material of the old building as if they had no roots there. The floating folds and slender metal frames, the provisional structures and milky curtains, allowed the work on display to shine forth unencumbered by past memories (pl. 98). In this way the *Documenta* conveyed an energised sense of freedom after the constrictions and gloom of wartime. The message, however, was not confined to the installations designed by Arnold Bode, the exhibition's founding spirit. Instead of the figurative neo-classical painting and sculpture sanctioned by the Nazis, the *Documenta* provided Germans with their first opportunity to re-connect with the avant-garde experiments of the 1920s and the abstract work that had developed in its wake. The principal voice behind the selection of the works for the early *Documentas* was the art historian Werner Haftmann. Bode invited Haftmann to join the working group for the first *Documenta* in 1954, the same year that Haftmann's monumental survey, *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, appeared and established him as the foremost German historian of modern art.¹⁴ Bode needed Haftmann's expertise and allowed him to have the principal say in the selection, although not the installation, of the work on display.¹⁵ In the catalogue for the second *Documenta* in 1959, Haftmann declared, famously, that 'quality in art is only possible when it develops in total freedom, uninhibited by non-artistic demands'.¹⁶ It was in consequence of its freedom from restrictions – political or representational – that 'art has become abstract'.¹⁷ Haftmann's championing of abstract art as a language of freedom was clearly an intervention in the polemics of the Cold War.¹⁸ Two months before the opening of the second *Documenta* in 1959, the de facto ruler of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht, had declared Socialist Realism the only officially sanctioned style.¹⁹ Haftmann's introduction to the *Documenta* catalogue was evidently aimed at Ulbricht. According to Haftmann, abstract art was the authentic expression of free people in a free world.

For Haftmann, art's value lay in providing the viewer with privileged access to the inner spiritual life of mankind, and it was this conception that governed the selection of the work on show in Kassel.²⁰ The first *Documenta* opened with work that represented the dominant movements of the early twentieth century: Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism. There was little trace, however, of more socially oriented artists such as El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy, or of the Bauhaus experiments in the applied arts. As visitors entered they were met on their left and right by enlarged photographic reproductions of archaic, early Christian and non-Western artefacts (pl. 99). Juxtapositions of this kind were nothing new – something similar had been done, famously, by the Surrealists, as well as by Barr in 1936 (in the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition) – but in this case it was particularly poignant in light of the Nazi past.²¹ The Nazis had displayed non-mimetic art forms alongside images of illness and disease in the catalogue of their *Entartete Kunst* ('Degenerate Art') exhibition so as to argue that the move away from representation towards abstraction was a kind of sickness. The wall of photographs at the *Documenta* gave the opposite message: that the search for abstract forms was a universal constant in the history of humankind. As vis-



98 Arnold Bode, display of a sculpture by Gustav H. Wolff and paintings by Giorgio Morandi at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.

itors moved from the lobby towards the exhibition rooms they were faced with another programmatic display. The entrances to the galleries were flanked by walls with poster-size photographs showing modern artists of the twentieth century, respectably dressed, in suits and ties (pl. 100). As Walter Grasskamp has argued, this was another effort to counter Nazi propaganda, whose effects were far from having been eliminated with the fall of the regime.²² In the *Degenerate Art* exhibition, the Nazis had portrayed modern artists as mad or decadent; the first *Documenta*, on the other hand, showed them as distinguished, upstanding citizens. At the same time, however, the anti-bourgeois attitudes that many of them held were discreetly concealed. Haftmann argued that it was through the heroic efforts of German artists like Willi Baumeister, Emil Nolde and Fritz Winter, who had continued secretly to produce abstract paintings during the Nazi years, that 'Germany remained alive



99 Arnold Bode, entrance hall at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.

100 Arnold Bode, corridor behind the entrance hall at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.



101 Arnold Bode, display of work by Pablo Picasso at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.

at all as a spiritual entity'.²³ In a remarkable installation in the main hall of the show, Picasso's *Girl in Front of a Mirror* of 1932 (pl. 101) was placed across from Fritz Winter's *Composition in Blue and Yellow* of 1955 (pl. 102), as if to symbolise the role of modern art in reconnecting Germany with mainstream European culture.

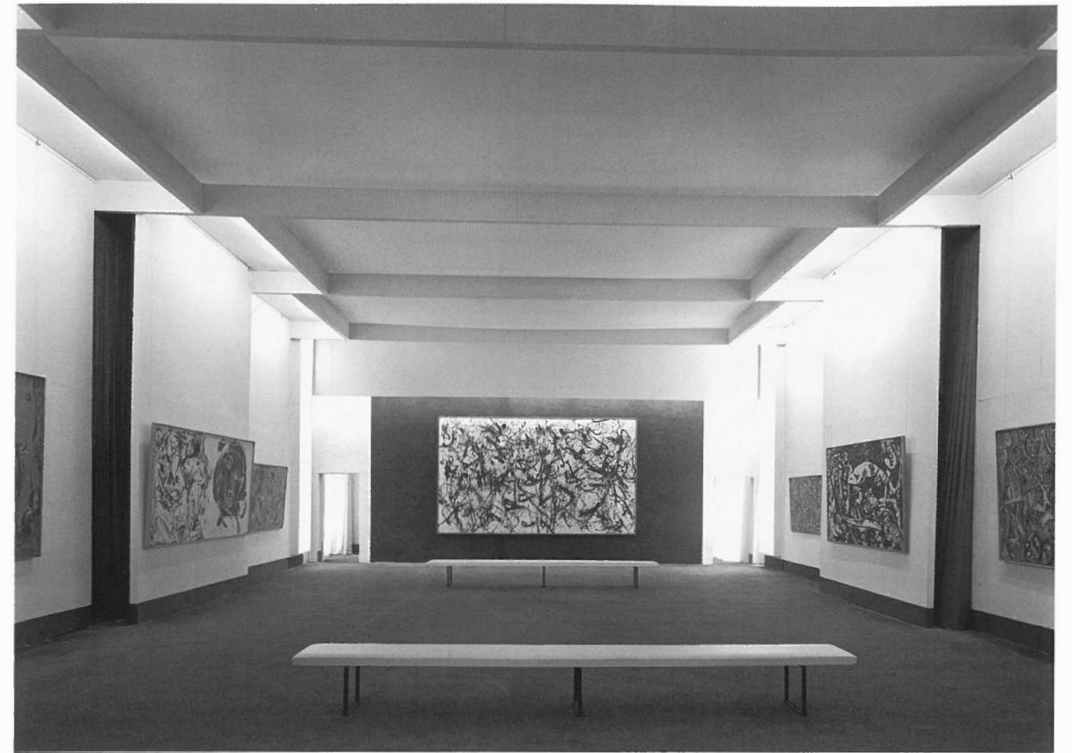
While the first *Documenta* concentrated on tracing the development of modern art in the first half of the twentieth century, the second *Documenta* in 1959 was intended to demonstrate the pre-eminence of abstraction in contemporary Western culture. This thesis was by no means universally accepted, and whereas the first *Documenta* was largely greeted with enthusiasm, the second provoked some criticism in the press.²⁴ Susanne Carwin, for example, writing in the magazine *Die Kultur*, declared that those who wished to be informed about the contemporary development of abstract art – Abstract Expressionism, in particular – would be well served in Kassel, but that no one should believe that it was a representative picture of contemporary art.²⁵ Objections were particularly raised against the dominance of American art – pride of place was given to the work of Jackson Pollock, who had recently died. Bode's arrangement of the Pollock room was very stylish: walls jutted rhythmically back and forth giving each painting its very own vertical surface. While most paintings hung on white walls illuminated by artificial light, Bode placed one huge



102 Arnold Bode, display of work by Fritz Winter at the *Documenta 1* in Kassel, 1955.

composition, *No. 32*, on a black wall at the short side of the room (pl. 103). Some took this display to be an undue assertion of American culture. Pollock's free all-over drippings seemed to broadcast 'a subjective unboundedness (*Bindungslosigkeit*)' that was indicative of the American way of life and its rampant hedonistic materialism.²⁶ For Haftmann and others, however, the rise of American Abstract Expressionism signalled just the opposite. It indicated a shared interest in the spiritual values of the Western world.²⁷ As if to demonstrate that this American art movement was part of a genuinely shared 'world culture' (something that Haftmann had maintained in his opening speech), Bode installed European Abstract Expressionism in the other main hall.²⁸ The German Ernst Wilhelm Nay's equally large *Freiburger Bild* of 1956 was also hung on a black wall at the end (pl. 104), in a way that corresponded to Pollock's *No. 32*. Nevertheless, the opening ceremony took place in the Pollock room and it was in front of *No. 32* that the speeches were given (pl. 105).

As the popular success of the *Documenta* grew, Bode, fully aware that his interiors had played a major part, became ever more bold in the environments he created. At the third *Documenta* in 1964 he dramatically hung three paintings by Ernst Wilhelm Nay not on the wall, as had been intended by the artist, but at an angle on the ceiling in a long, corridor-like room (pl. 106). He chose a darkened space in the attic of the Museum Frid-



103 Arnold Bode, display of work by Jackson Pollock at the *Documenta 2* in Kassel, 1959.

ericanum for a group of kinetic sculptures and showed them amongst spotlights that made their movements appear mysterious rather than mechanical (pl. 107). There was little difference between this arrangement and the way he had displayed Olivetti typewriters at a commercial exhibition in Frankfurt three years before (pl. 108). Both installations played with the allure of the unknown, the mystique of the animated thing. The differences between a Jean Tinguely and an Olivetti typewriter were obscured in a choreography of dramatic and immersive experiences. Spectators entered a dream-like world in which the artwork or the commodity were experienced as part of what Walter Benjamin called 'phantasmagoria'.

For Benjamin, phantasmagoric experience is characteristic of a culture dominated by mass consumption: it is a form of experience that, while it promises fulfilment, remains essentially empty. According to Benjamin, the contrast to the phantasmagoria of the consumer culture lay in a collectively anchored form of experience within which 'certain contents of the individual past combine with material of the collective past'.²⁹ The Museum of Modern Art in New York was the first art museum to address its spectators as consumers. What is noticeable, however, is that it did so in a way that was more didactic than phantasmagoric. The Museum of Modern Art saw it as its mission to elevate consumers into

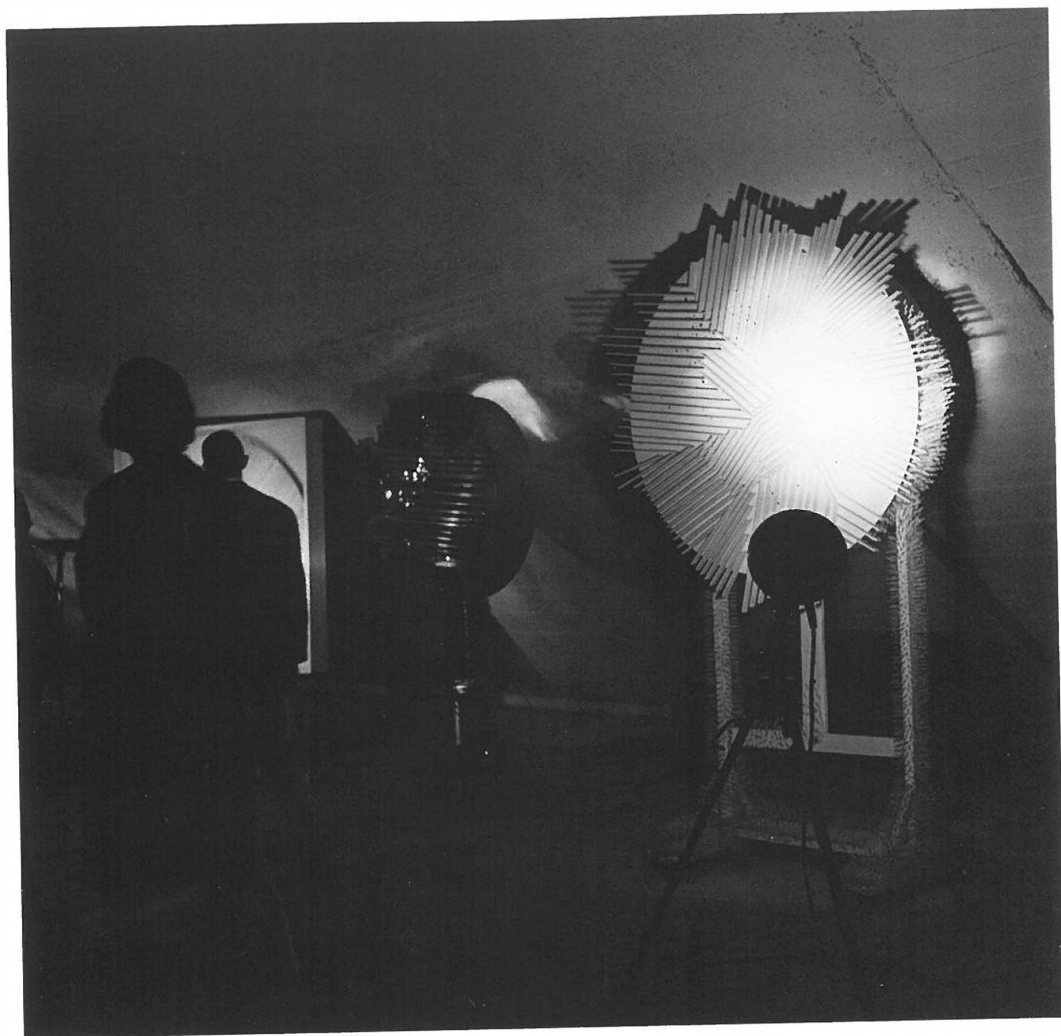


104 Arnold Bode, display of work by Ernst Willhem Nay at the *Documenta 2* in Kassel, 1959.

105 Arnold Bode giving the opening speech at the *Documenta 2* in Kassel, 1959.



106 Arnold Bode, display of work by Ernst Willhelm Nay at the *Documenta 3* in Kassel, 1964.



107 Arnold Bode, display of work by Günther Uecker at the *Documenta 3* in Kassel, 1964.

taste-makers and thus to turn them into responsible members of the newly emerging consumer society. Its exhibitions were more often than not serious pedagogical undertakings with a high level of conceptual content. The dream-like quality that Benjamin detected as already present in the attitude of the nineteenth-century consumer and *flâneur* entered the art gallery only after the Second World War. As the scale of consumption expanded and became for more and more people a leisure activity with independent entertainment value, so galleries came to offer a more immersive, spectacular experience.³⁰ Three conditions needed to be in place for this to take hold: the emergence of the art tourist, which removed the personal stake people had in local collections; the development of temporary events putting artistic novelty to the fore; and, finally, the creation of a sensory environment



108 Arnold Bode, display of *Stile Olivetti* typewriters at a trade fair in Frankfurt, 1961. From *Architektur und Wohnform*, vol. 69, no. 6 (1961), p. 90.

directed towards absorption rather than instruction. The *Documenta* of 1955 could be said to be the first exhibition to satisfy all three of these conditions. In such a mode of experience, the past, unremembered, remains shut off from the present – a mode of reception perfectly suited to a country that had trouble coming to terms with its history.

A Museum of 100 Days

As soon as the European nation-states opened their museums in the first decades of the nineteenth century, influential voices identified them as a threat to cultural life. Nietzsche (in *The Use and Disadvantage of History for Life*) was neither the first nor the last to see museums as a symptom of the decline of modern culture. Their orientation to the past led to knowledge of a culture, not culture itself, Nietzsche claimed.³¹ In the very year that the first *Documenta* opened, the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno made very much the same point. Although his principal aesthetic interests were in music and literature, Adorno had become well known as a defender of avant-garde art in the disputes about abstract and figurative art that divided the German art world in the years after the war.³² In an essay on Valéry and Proust, he wrote about the museum as follows:

The expression ‘museal’ has an unfriendly tone in German. It designates objects to which the spectator no longer relates in any vital manner and which die by themselves. They are preserved more because of historical reasons than from a present need. Museum and mausoleum are not only related through phonetic association.³³

According to Adorno, Valéry and Proust were responding to the lifelessness of objects in museums – desperately trying to reanimate what ‘historical reasons’ had killed. The *Documenta* organisers shared Adorno’s negative view of the museum as an institution.³⁴



109 Flags in front of the Museum Fridericianum during the *Documenta 2* in Kassel, 1959.

For Bode, the museum's attempts to archive, preserve and order art historically were impediments to an appreciation of art rather than aids to its understanding. 'The uneasiness about this has put many of us off the museum', he declared.³⁵ Instead of simulating the permanence of a museum, for the *Documenta* he did everything he could to highlight its nature as an event, organising lectures, concerts and film screenings to go along with it. Nothing gives a sense of the festival atmosphere better than the colourful flags (created by Bode's very own design office) that flew in front of the Museum Fridericianum during the second *Documenta* (pl. 109).³⁶ With its four- to five-year cycle, the *Documenta* was more dedicated to the presentation of new and contemporary art than any museum with a permanent collection could ever be.

The *Documenta* organisers, however, did not share the political impetus that lay behind Adorno's view of the museum. In contrast to Adorno's call for resistance to the alienating effects of capitalism, they saw no reason to question the role of art spectatorship in a capitalist society. The anti-institutional attitude of the *Documenta*'s organisers was not the product of a radical social vision on their part but corresponded to the demands of the capitalist market, which places a high value on flexibility and responsiveness. The avant-garde dream of a radical reconstruction of society had no place in the process of rebuild-

ing the post-war German economy. There is no question that its character of immediacy and responsiveness made an important contribution to the success of the *Documenta* as a central event in the contemporary art world. As Walter Grasskamp wrote: 'With each succeeding *Documenta*, the enterprise assumes greater and greater significance as an arbiter of contemporary art styles and markets.'³⁷ As a temporary but recurrent international art show, it has served as a model for many curator-led biennales and contemporary art festivals in the last few decades.³⁸

Art Spectatorship as a Lifestyle Issue

The distinctiveness of the *Documenta* of 1955 emerges most clearly when we see it in the context of other exhibition installations that were available to Bode. Bode's *Documenta* designs show clear traces of two models that it is more than likely that he saw as a young man.³⁹ Bode had moved from Kassel to Berlin in 1930 to be a lecturer at a training college for art teachers. The college syllabus was modelled on the Bauhaus curriculum and Bode's responsibility was to teach the preliminary course, concentrating on formal characteristics – plane, space, colour, and black and white.⁴⁰ In an interview of 1973 Bode recalled that he had already been interested in the Bauhaus in the early 1920s – Weimar, after all, was not far from Kassel.⁴¹ Given his interest, he could hardly have failed to visit Mies van der Rohe's and Lilly Reich's great exhibition of Bauhaus and Bauhaus-influenced architecture and building while he was in Berlin (see Chapter Three). Here he would have encountered Lilly Reich's beautiful arrangements of materials such as marble, wood, textiles and glass sheets within a free-flowing space (pl. 66). Her way of contrasting the soft folds of fabric with the rough surfaces of raw building materials was echoed in the contrast between brick walls and milky plastic curtains in Bode's *Documenta* installation thirty-four years later. Yet one crucial aspect of Reich's approach to design was not taken up by Bode: however creatively Reich turned unlikely materials into visually arresting compositions, her arrangements always made an intellectual point – in this case about the usefulness of the material for the construction of modern buildings. Bode's arrangements were more purely visual; his object was to create a form of sensual, intuitive experience, not to advance intellectual comprehension. His aim, as he explained in 1964, was to enable 'visual understanding',⁴² 'to create spaces and spatial relations in which the paintings and sculptures can unfold, where they can gain intensity and radiate according to colour and form, mood, and expressive force'.⁴³

A second influence, as Walter Grasskamp has also observed, was unquestionably El Lissitzky's 'Abstract Cabinet' (pl. 5).⁴⁴ Moving between Kassel and Berlin, Bode would have had to pass through Hanover, and it is almost certain that he would have seen the 'Abstract Cabinet' while he was there. Bode's efforts to make the walls of his exhibitions mobile are reminiscent of Lissitzky's shimmering and optically varying walls. Instead of using angled slats, however, Bode made use of the folds of long sheets of plastic. Another echo of Lissitzky's room was in the way in which works in the *Documenta* were sometimes placed on white and sometimes on black backgrounds. Once again, however, Bode was copying



110 Arnold Bode, display of Göppinger plastics at a trade fair in Hanover, 1951. From *Architektur und Wohnform*, vol. 60, no. 4 (1951), p. 80.

formal features of a display without sharing the original motivation behind it. Lissitzky's changing backgrounds demanded active participation from the gallery visitors as they moved through the room; for Bode, they were merely a device to break up the monotony of a hanging scheme. Whereas Lissitzky was endeavouring to elicit intersubjective and collective behaviour from the visitors (for example, by getting them to move works around and so making them responsible for determining each other's experience), Bode had no intention of challenging the kind of spectatorship that privileged individual experience; the dominant mode of experience at the *Documenta* in the 1950s was sensual and immersive.

It is remarkable how similar Bode's art installations were to his commercial interior designs. Before the *Documenta*, Bode had achieved some fame as a designer.⁴⁵ After being suspended from his teaching job by the Nazis (he was a member of the Social Democratic Party), he earned his living producing furniture in the family workshop in Kassel. Although Bode took up work as a teacher again after the war at Kassel's new art college, he continued to supplement his income with furniture and interior design for the firms Korrekta and Göppinger Kaliko. These companies specialised in the use of modern materials like foam and plastic – materials Bode would put to use in his designs for the *Documenta*. Both his *Documenta* spaces and his commercial exhibition designs are notable for their organic yet clear and elegant lines (pl. 110). His pre-war admiration for the Bauhaus notwithstanding, Bode turned his back on purism and functionalism in favour of playful lines and bold colours. In this way he became one of the pioneers of what is called the '*Nierentisch* culture' of the 1950s, named after the small, kidney-shaped coffee tables that were then fashionable. In the words of the historian Paul Betts, the *Nierentisch* culture 'represented a vital break from an unwanted past by creating a new visual vocabulary of restored optimism and material prosperity'.⁴⁶ In a rare interview on his design practice, Bode argued that purism had no place in interior decoration:

The entire task [of the designer] is: goal-oriented, imaginative experimenting! The possibilities are limitless; let's grasp them unhesitatingly, but with seriousness. The result of our effort must be: a freer, lighter, happier form of our immediate environment: the human interior.⁴⁷

His colleague at the Göppinger Kaliko, the designer Max Burchartz, added:

the decoration is not only in unison with the material, it is also in harmony with our time, with the feeling and atmosphere of life of contemporary man. . . . we detest the finicky corner mentality with stale drapery, the dark narrowness, its so-called and now very suspect hominess (*Gemütlichkeit*).⁴⁸

The new design was meant to give people living in such rooms 'an energised feeling of freedom'. This was just what the *Documenta* experience was intended to offer the many thousands of Germans who flocked to see it. Just as abstract art became wallpaper in his interior designs (see pl. 110), Bode used actual works in his *Documenta* exhibitions to create stylised interiors. In his response to the show, a critic from the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* captured the sense in which the *Documenta* aimed to blur the boundary between art and modern living:

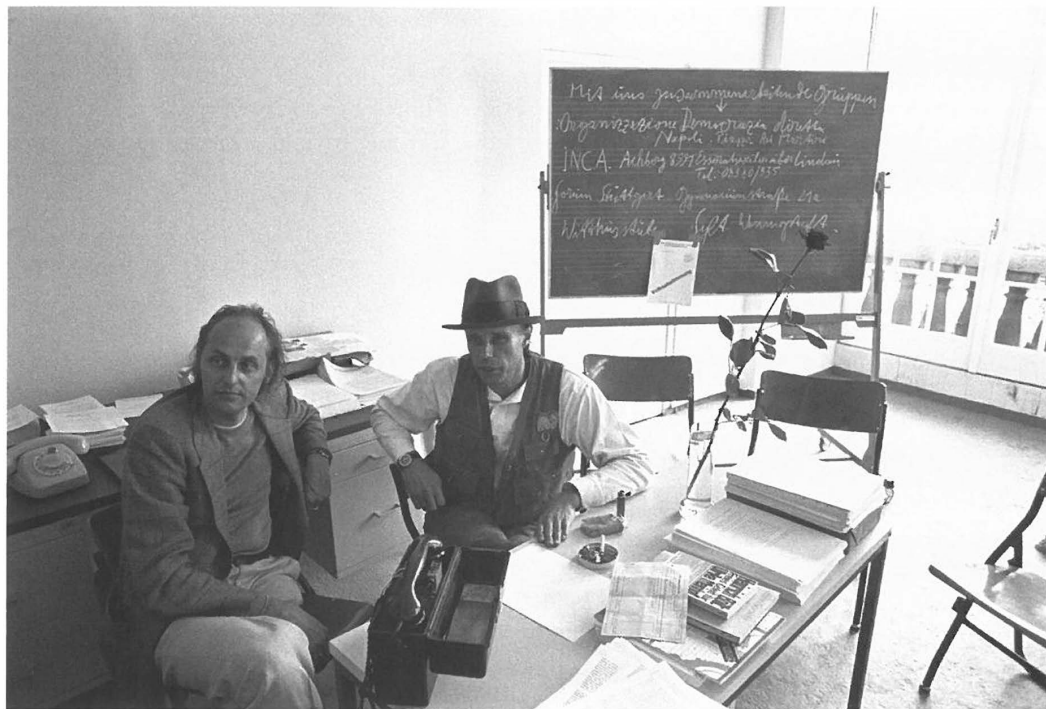
The young couple that eats a tub of ice cream in a modern café in front of an abstractly designed wall, the woman who chooses a fashionable dress fabric with daring colour patches, the husband who decides for a modern wallpaper and the school child that experiences an abstract sculpture in the schoolyard as a normal addition to his recess – all of these have already gone a long way towards understanding modern art creation without even knowing it.⁴⁹

By fashioning beauty from the ruins left by the war, Bode's mises-en-scène offered a striking and welcome symbol of the way in which the economic miracle could help to rebuild people's identity.

The Legacy: Artists' Installations and their Consequences

By the time Bode died in 1977, the creation of environments for the display of art had long since been taken up by artists themselves. The expanding art market of the 1960s had strengthened artists' positions and they had become increasingly critical of museum curators for installing their work in ways that flouted their intentions. Moreover, there was a strong reaction on the part of many artists against modes of display that reduced art to a mere lifestyle experience. At the fifth *Documenta* in 1972, for example, the celebrated German artist Joseph Beuys installed an *Office for Direct Democracy*. This 'work' was exactly what the title said: a bare and decidedly unstylish office with desks, chairs, paper and a blackboard (pl. 111).⁵⁰ Instead of offering the spectator the prospect of sensual immersion, Beuys simply established a space in which he argued over the merits of direct participation in the political process with whoever walked in. This was a deliberate reaction against immersive installations like Bode's, which, in the view of Beuys and other like-minded artists, made it impossible for art to address socially important issues.

Rather than rejecting the allure of gallery installations as Beuys did, other artists began to play with its conventions in an effort to confront the relationship between the exhibition of art and the acquisition of commodities. On 1 December 1961, in time for the Christ-



111 Joseph Beuys, *Office for Direct Democracy through Plebiscite* at the Documenta 5 in Kassel, 1972.

mas season, the artist Claes Oldenburg, who had arrived in the United States from Sweden in the 1950s, opened his own store at 107 East 2nd Street, in one of the poorest areas of Manhattan. Oldenburg's shop display reflected the colourful mixture of shops in the neighbourhood, where butchers were cheek by jowl with second-hand furniture stores, grocers and cheap clothing merchants. Oldenburg modelled goods from the cheap end of the consumer market in plaster-soaked muslin and painted them in bright and sumptuous enamel colours.⁵¹ In doing so, he elevated the products' rough-and-ready appearance into the lofty realm of aesthetic contemplation, much as Duchamp had done with his famous *Fountain* of 1917. On the obverse side, he was also deliberately contaminating the tasteful and tidy enclosed world of the contemporary art gallery by inserting it into the messy and chaotic reality of modern urban life.

While Oldenburg was playing off the detached world of connoisseurial contemplation against the more involved mode of consumption in the marketplace, Andy Warhol was about to bring them together. Warhol, who had worked in advertising and as a window dresser, decided to become an artist in 1961. Less than a year later he was given his first one-man show in a commercial gallery in Los Angeles. Visitors who entered the Ferus Gallery in 1962 could be excused if they were confused about what was expected of them. Warhol arranged his screen prints of *Campbell's Soup Cans* on a shelf that ran along the walls of the white gallery space like so many items for sale in a supermarket (pl. 112). The



112 Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans* at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, 1962.

display highlighted the way in which stores and museums followed the same principles. The white wall and flexible ground plan with removable partitions had become a dominant mode of display after the Second World War in commercial spaces as well as in museums.⁵² Warhol showed his screen prints like artworks on the white walls of the museum – at eye level and with sufficient distance between them so that none could be seen as having greater value than another. Yet by placing them on a shelf and exploiting the similarity of the images themselves (they differed only with respect to the flavour on each label), what Warhol evoked was not so much the aesthetic contemplation of unique objects as the multiple-choice dilemma of a consumer facing products on the shelves of a store. The message that Warhol conveyed to his audience was that the experience to be had in an art gallery was no more meaningful than that in a supermarket. This became quite explicit in his retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York in 1971. Warhol papered the gallery walls with a repeating image of a cow's head that stared vacuously back at the viewers in the same way that they themselves stared at the *Electric Chairs* and other work by Warhol on display.⁵³

In Germany at the time two young artists were making a similar point, but instead of bringing the shopper's gaze to bear on the contents of the art gallery, they brought a kind of aesthetic contemplation to the marketplace. On 11 October 1963 Konrad Lueg and Gerhard Richter arranged themselves and the contents of an ordinary living room like

sculptures in a museum in the centre of a furniture store in Düsseldorf. After half an hour they got up to guide people around the store while reading out texts from furniture catalogues.⁵⁴ Lueg and Richter, in conjoining art and consumption, drew attention to the common attitudes informing commercial design and such displays as the *Documenta*.

At this stage, the optimism with which artists had embraced the design of exhibition rooms as a laboratory for alternative forms of collective interaction had disappeared.⁵⁵ Even Beuys's gallery installations increasingly became the record of his efforts to create a new kind of public outside the museum. For him, the creation of environments that filled entire gallery rooms was mainly motivated by a strong aversion to the way in which the experience of exhibitions had become a matter of lifestyle. For other artists, environments were an opportunity to highlight the convergence of the museum and the shopping experience. In general, however, the rise of room-filling artist installations has caused display experiments by curators like Bode to disappear almost entirely from the modern art museum. If anything of this kind is to be found today, it is in those museums showing pre-modern art that need not accommodate artist-created environments. Yet here a pseudo-historical ethos has come to dominate, far removed from past experiments with modes of viewing.

Perhaps the most famous example of just such an approach is Timothy Clifford's refurbishment of the Manchester Art Gallery carried out in the early 1980s. It signalled a shift away from the white walls and reduced decor that dominated in the post-war period. In Britain this move was pioneered in the 1970s by Michael Jaffé, the director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.⁵⁶ In Cambridge and Manchester the rich dark red walls, painted friezes, with occasionally a dense multi-tiered hang of pictures interspersed with sculptures, furniture and the odd potted palm, were intended to recall the putatively opulent atmosphere of Victorian times (pl. 113).⁵⁷ Yet the displays did not revive the nineteenth-century ideal of the spectator as citizen. In fact, as far as most of the national galleries of the nineteenth century are concerned, such a cluttered display is anachronistic. The first director of the National Gallery in London, Charles Eastlake, was quite explicit about this in the 1840s when he stated that the ideal hang would be one in which each picture was displayed on its own, with the minimum of distractions surrounding it (see Chapter One).⁵⁸ Nor did this kind of gallery interior invent a new mode of viewing in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, it provided a fresh variation on the tradition of the spectator as consumer. By the end of the twentieth century it had become as fashionable to evoke past styles in fashion-led interior design as it had been to be future-oriented in the 1950s. Ten years later, the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich showed its collection of work by the group Blaue Reiter against bright red, intense blue and golden-yellow walls. Again, the rationale offered was that this represented a return to a historically more appropriate mode of display.⁵⁹ Yet only the dark blue for the Blaue Reiter exhibition at the Galerie Thannhauser in 1911 is documented, and neither hue of the other colours is historically plausible as a background for the pictures (pl. 47). In fact, the wall colours in the Lenbachhaus were arrived at by picking out a hue common to several pictures intended for show, irrespective of any historical precedent for doing so. This is a strategy that is often adopted in today's displays of older art. The use of a novel background colour promises a fresh experience of work that might otherwise appear dull by comparison with the vividness of contemporary



113 Timothy Clifford, display of work by Frederic, Lord Leighton and others at the Manchester City Art Galleries, 1982.

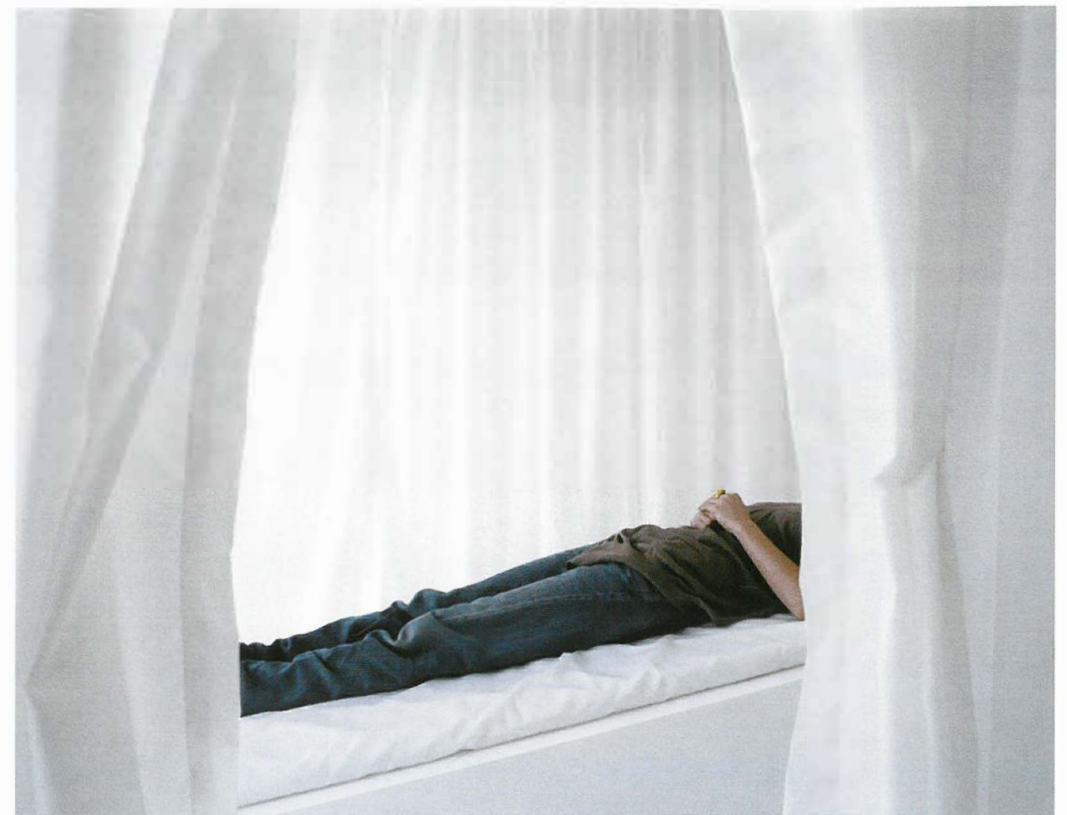
art. Yet such colour choices are made with increasing frequency not by curators but by interior designers, who nowadays are very often employed in art galleries.⁶⁰ They take decisions that were once an essential part of the curator's job. The result is that stylish interior design dominates the spectator's experience. Colours reappeared in galleries at just the point (the 1980s) when interior decoration magazines began to advocate the abandonment of the white wall and the return to colourful walls for the home. But this represented no deviation from entrenched modes of viewing, no challenge to individual contemplation, and certainly no departure from the idea of the spectator as consumer.

Bode's *Documenta* installations were perhaps the last time that a curator deliberately set out to create a viewing experience that would correspond to a current social ideal. However politically problematic we might now judge it to be, there is no doubt that the idea of a stylish, free, cosmopolitan existence, unencumbered by the weight of the past, contributed

powerfully to the self-image of West German society following the Second World War. Three elements introduced by the *Documenta* were to have significant and lasting effects on the exhibition of art. First, there was the development of the spectator as tourist. It is the connection between tourism and the visiting of art galleries (and the huge expansion of the former in recent years) that has been principally responsible for the spectacular growth in attendance figures at all the major art museums in Europe and North America.⁶¹ Secondly, the curator-as-hero is still a current notion, although nowadays he or she takes fewer liberties with the design of rooms or the visual presentation of individual works: curators are more likely to assert themselves through a striking thematic conception that subsumes the works on show. Thirdly, artists have not always resisted curators' extravagant installations; before long they discovered the power of immersive installations and appropriated the idea for themselves. Instead of leading to a new mode of viewing art, however, the success of such installations means that nowadays visitors move from one room to the next, sampling each immersive experience in the way that they once moved from one picture to the next along the gallery walls.

One of the leading representatives of this kind of artistic practice, Ilya Kabakov, has coined the term 'total installation' for such artist-created environments.⁶² Importantly, Kabakov's installations also include a distancing dimension, designed to prompt self-reflection on the part of the spectator. According to Kabakov, total installations are instruments that allow the viewer to recognise the illusion being created by the installation while simultaneously being wholly absorbed into it. His exhibition (with Emilia Kabakov) at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 2005 is a good example of this (pl. 114). In *The House of Dreams* visitors were invited to fall asleep on raised beds behind subtly undulating white curtains, or to enter into dreamscapes behind closed doors. Yet this seductive environment also carried disturbing overtones of hospitals and coffins, and the frequent intrusion of other visitors disrupted the experience of immersion whenever it was about to take over completely.⁶³

There is, however, a strong desire among the exhibition-going public to override such distancing effects. When the Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson produced *The Weather Project* for Tate Modern in London in 2003–4, he created the most successful immersive art event yet. But its great popular success depended precisely on most of its admirers ignoring the distancing aspects of Eliasson's installation. Although Eliasson emphasised the constructed nature of the installation, laying bare and making obvious the artificiality of his work, most of the more than two million visitors who came to see the project were mesmerised. The misty atmosphere and the monochrome environment produced by the lamps that made up a huge artificial indoor sun led many to stay for hours, enraptured, in the massive expanse of the Turbine Hall. It was as if Eliasson's installation had tapped into a new need at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a need for a space of experience that is as deeply sensual and immersive as Bode's, but at the same time less real. Where the *Documenta* was fashionably stylish and modern, *The Weather Project* allowed its participants to escape into another realm. By providing a set of simple sensory illusions, the installation enabled those who were ready for it to lose themselves in the kind of out-of-body experience that is normally drug-induced and rarely available legally.⁶⁴



114 Ilya Kabakov and Emilia Kabakov, *The House of Dreams* exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in London, 2005.

Such artist-determined spaces do not, however, lead to new conceptions of gallery spectatorship as did the curator-created gallery interiors of the past. Each totally absorbing, they vie for attention with one another as they appear side by side in the museum – much like the different stores in a shopping mall. Despite their creators' intentions, they do not challenge established consumer modes of viewing.

Modern Art Museums at the Turn of the Millennium

Where do such developments leave modern art galleries at the turn of the twentieth century? The most striking aspect is that modern art galleries are now remarkably similar on the inside. Museums like the National Gallery in London and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin lost their colourful walls and period details in the modernisation campaigns that took place from the 1930s onwards. White walls were introduced, ceilings lowered; sometimes carpets were laid and partitions inserted. While this trend has been reversed for pre-modern art

galleries – the period detail of the rooms in the National Gallery in London and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin has been painstakingly restored in recent years – it is still the prevalent environment for showing modern and contemporary art. This is perhaps surprising, given the fact that modern and contemporary art galleries have given architects such enormous opportunities for experimentation. The building boom in contemporary art museums that began in the 1980s is still going strong today. Yet, while these new buildings could not be more different externally, they are strikingly uniform inside.⁶⁵

This becomes obvious if we compare three of the more celebrated new gallery buildings: the new extension of the Museum of Modern Art in New York,⁶⁶ Tate Modern in London, which opened in the year 2000 and currently attracts four million visitors every year, and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which, when it opened in 1997, attracted one and a half million visitors to a declining industrial city in northern Spain of which only a very limited number of people outside Spain had previously heard.⁶⁷

The Guggenheim in Bilbao was designed by the American architect Frank Gehry. It is an offshoot of the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which, in the 1990s, set out to establish branches of itself in America and Europe. The New York Guggenheim's relationship to these offshoots is like that of a commercial franchising company.⁶⁸ The government of the semi-autonomous Basque country in northern Spain committed \$100 million to pay for construction plus \$50 million for acquisitions, as well as paying a \$20 million fee to the New York Guggenheim and granting a subsidy to cover any shortfall in revenue. In return, the Guggenheim gave its name to the new museum, oversaw the construction process, has helped with its running, and rotates parts of its collection to it. However, many of the visitors drawn by the Guggenheim name and Gehry's edifice to Bilbao have been disappointed by the work on display. Like a spaceship from a far-flung world, the titanium-clad building appears as if out of nowhere on abandoned docklands at the edge of the city (pl. 115). Its assemblage of unique forms and interlocking segments provides an entirely new sense of space. But inside, only a few of the gallery rooms retain this sense of daring experimentation. Most dramatic is the museum's ground-level gallery, bigger than a football field and with a ceiling that soars high above the walls. The ceiling starts tall and then dips down as the gallery ducks under the bridge that spans the river (pl. 116). The gallery was designed with the work of Richard Serra in mind, and its gently undulating walls are a fitting interior to display Serra's *Snake*, which is on exhibition here. Likewise, the curved walls of another double-height gallery match up nicely with Jenny Holzer's red-and-blue LED columns. Holzer is one of a small number of artists who were invited to Bilbao before the building was finished in order to acquaint themselves with the galleries and do some site-specific work. Thus she was able to respond to the space, a space whose individuality and dramatic quality could easily overwhelm any work displayed in it. Apart from this, however, most of the rooms in the Guggenheim Bilbao are not at all experimental. Two levels of three square, day-lit rooms are used to display the Guggenheim's modern painting collection. Along with five other larger rectilinear spaces used to show the Spanish collection that Bilbao is committed to building up, these rooms make clear that the museum does not essentially depart from the conventions of modern art gallery space (pl. 117). Indeed, with their white walls,



115 Frank O. Gehry and Associates, The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, 1997.

wooden floors and enfilade arrangement, these rooms are some of the most traditional in recent years.

In many ways, Tate Modern was conceived as a reaction to the Bilbao Guggenheim. Tate Modern wanted to avoid the charge levelled against the Guggenheim: that it fails to acknowledge that the history of modern art presented there is only partial and that its extrovert architecture overpowers the impact of the works shown within. The senior planning team in London were disconcerted by the rootlessness of the Guggenheim building.⁶⁹ Gehry's iridescent architecture has given Bilbao a new tourist attraction, but it does not resonate with the city in other ways. Moreover, the bulk of its modern art collection has been brought in from New York and represents a particularly American view of the history



116 Frank O. Gehry, The Boat Gallery at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, 1997.

117 Frank O. Gehry, exhibition rooms at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, 1997.



of contemporary art. Works are only installed temporarily, since the Guggenheim rotates its collection internationally, and exhibitions have ranged from Chinese art to Armani fashions, making it hard for the museum to develop a distinctive identity or purpose. At Tate Modern, on the other hand, rootedness was to some extent guaranteed by the decision to convert an already existing building. The Tate Gallery, which was dedicated to the display of British art, was founded in the 1890s as an offshoot of the National Gallery.⁷⁰ A hundred years later it had also become the premier art gallery in Britain for international modern and contemporary art. Its building in Millbank was bursting at the seams and had developed offshoots at St Ives in Cornwall and Liverpool. A decision was made to separate British art – this remained in the old building, now renamed Tate Britain – from international modern and contemporary art. The latter was to be moved to what is now known as Tate Modern, located in a former power station on the other side of the Thames opposite St Paul's Cathedral. One major reason why the Swiss architects Herzog and de Meuron won the competition for the conversion was that they did not propose radical changes to the building's appearance (pl. 118). The conversion of a building with a history invited the (very 1960s) idea of presenting art in contexts that would be a part of daily life, rather than segregating it within the space of the art world.

As the building has emerged, however, connections with Tate Modern's past as a power station are largely confined to the (admittedly massive) space of the former turbine hall (pl. 119). This dark and brooding industrial brick and steel space, seven storeys high and running the entire length of the building, leaves the greatest impression on visitors and has been the site of artists' installations (for example, Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project*) on a scale that would previously have been impossible inside a conventional gallery. The three vast floors of exhibition spaces are linked to the Turbine Hall by some bluish-green glass boxes that serve as rest areas between the gallery rooms. The gallery space itself, however, falls very much within the 'white cube' orthodoxy of modern gallery displays. Perhaps the most unusual feature is that a dynamic flow is not created by the use of partition walls, but by the arrangement of the gallery space into a sequence of irregularly sized rooms. None of Tate Modern's galleries, however, is a particularly memorable space (pl. 120). The light in them is flat, except in a few large rooms overlooking the river. The untreated, raw oak boards and the occasional iron grids on the floor are subtle reminders of the building's industrial past, but they do little to alter what in other respects is a fairly conventional modern gallery environment.

Although the curatorial team did not use the interior of the gallery rooms to explore alternative viewing experiences, they did adopt an unusual strategy for the display of the collection. By the time of the Tate's expansion, many critics had challenged the developmental view of the history of modern art, first popularised by Barr in New York and continued in displays such as at the Guggenheim in Bilbao. In response, the curators at Tate Modern did not adopt a chronological hang at all, but instead organised the work thematically in four suites on two levels. The themes of the opening arrangement in 2000 corresponded to the eighteenth-century academic hierarchy of genres: history, the nude, landscape and still life.⁷¹ Thus the work of a single artist could easily appear in more than one suite. Furthermore, as a way of rejecting the over-simplification that goes with developmental histories of art,



118 Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, Tate Modern in London, 2000.

some rooms within each section were dedicated to a single year and were hung so as to show the very different works that were being produced at the same time. Other rooms, however, were devoted to the detailed exploration of the work of a single artist. Organising the collection in this way draws attention to two points: first, that different stories can be told about the same works of art and that there is no single authoritative narrative that it is the job of the museum to impart; and, secondly, that the meaning of art is dependent on the context in which it is viewed.⁷² The curatorial aim was much more visitor-oriented than didactic. They thought of the Turbine Hall as a public space, like a covered street, and the idea behind the clustering was that visitors with different interests would find different points of entry into what was being shown to them. The hope was that this would enable people to link the work on display with personal concerns and attitudes.



119 Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, The Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in London, 2005.

In this way the Tate Modern team continued the tradition of strong curatorial interpretation even if it did not choose to explore different kinds of gallery interior and spectator experiences. There is, in fact, a 1930s precedent for the thematic display of modern art: the Nazis' *Grosse deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) of 1937 at the Haus der Kunst in Munich. Here, too, work was generously spaced along white walls, subsumed under the academic rubrics of history, landscape, nude and still life (see Chapter Three, pl. 75). Here, however, the marble wainscoting and the grandeur of the halls were used symbolically to evoke eternal values, while Tate Modern's displays, although they do not endorse one single narrative of stylistic development, do present art as subject to historical change. Each of the suites explored the ways in which the themes dealt with have been transformed over the last hundred years or so, a change that was indicated by the rather complex title of each section: History Memory Society; Nude Action Body; Landscape Matter Environment; Still Life Object Real Life.

Perhaps as a result of its effort to reach out to visitors beyond the traditional, well-educated museum-goer, or perhaps because of its architecture, which is at once unassum-



120 Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, exhibition rooms at Tate Modern in London, 2000.

ing and spectacular, Tate Modern has become the most popular modern and contemporary art museum in the world. Yet despite the fact that it is based in an existing building, it is no more rooted in London than the Guggenheim is in Bilbao. The collection features the same artists to be found in most modern art museums; its exhibitions are no more specific to London than those in the Guggenheim are to Bilbao (they are often touring exhibitions from North America or elsewhere in Europe); and most of its visitors are, as in Bilbao, tourists. It might even be said that Gehry's museum is more in tune with the artists' criticism of the institution of the art museum. It has become a commonplace to say that what makes an object into a work of art is the institutional fact that it is placed in a museum, and the drama of Gehry's architecture highlights that fact and confronts the spectator with it more vividly than does Tate Modern.



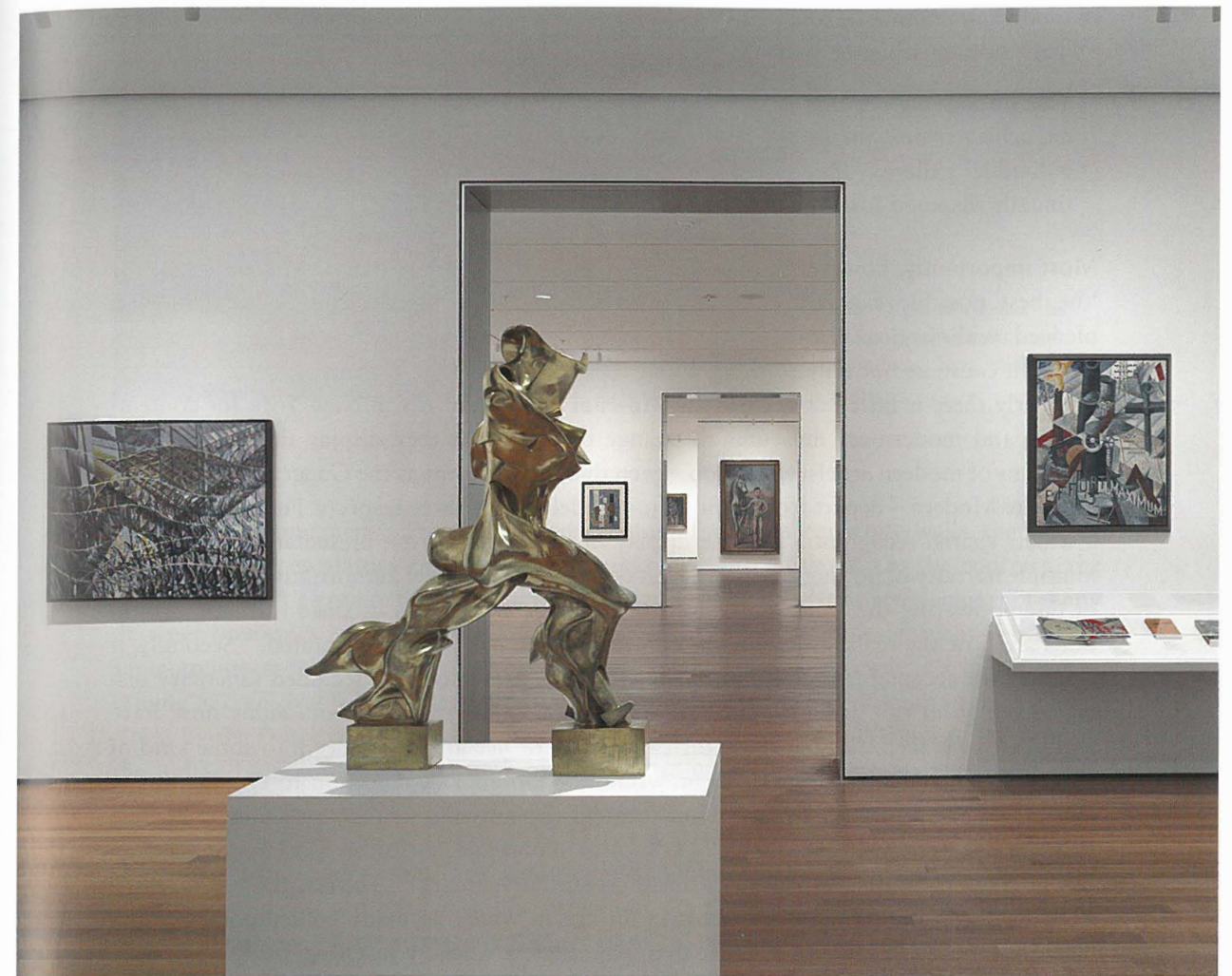
121 Philip Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone, entrance of the Museum of Modern Art on 53rd Street in New York, 1939.

The new extension of the Museum of Modern Art in New York is very different from both Tate Modern and the Bilbao Guggenheim. Neither a spectacular architectural statement nor an adaptation of an existing landmark building, MoMA opted for an extension that would blend in with the commercial buildings in its neighbourhood. This seeming understatement had the advantage that it brought with it a recognition of the original building's architectural history. The Goodwin and Stone building was the first of its type in Manhattan, and had begun the tradition of modernist buildings clad in stone and glass that today dominate the skyline. As part of the new development, it was restored to its former glory, including its curvilinear canopy (pl. 121). The new wings, by the Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi, are faced in black slate, picking up on Eero Saarinen's black granite CBS headquarters on West 53rd Street (pl. 10). A public passageway with views of the restored



122 Yoshio Taniguchi, The Atrium at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 2004.

sculpture gardens connects 53rd and 54th Street and provides an entrance to the museum from both sides. Like the reception area at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, or the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, the new Museum of Modern Art opens with a dramatic soaring atrium (pl. 122). Larger galleries for contemporary art are located on the second floor, with smaller galleries for the older collection on the levels above. Temporary exhibitions are staged in more spacious sky-lit rooms on the top floor. While there are mesmerising vistas of interweaving staircases from the circulation areas and of balconies in the contemporary galleries, most of the rooms are much like those in Bilbao, London and elsewhere: white, clutter-free rectangular rooms of various heights that succeed each other in an irregular pattern to provide a sense of flow (pl. 123). It soon became apparent that the planning team was aiming to recreate Barr's Museum of Modern Art for the twenty-first century. 'We need to come up with a means of articulating our history', Glenn D. Lowry, the director, wrote in summary of an initial discussion that took place in 1996, and this meant re-establishing the intimate viewing experience that the museum had provided in 1939.⁷³ 'Barr firmly believed', wrote the chief curator of painting and sculpture, Kirk Varnedoe, 'that the



123 Yoshio Taniguchi, The Alfred H. Barr, Jr Painting and Sculpture Galleries on the fifth floor of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 2004.

sense of private, subjective experience in modern bourgeois life was radical'.⁷⁴ On the eve of the opening of the new building, John Elderfield, who was responsible for the display of the painting and sculpture collection, once again emphasised the importance of fidelity to MoMA's tradition: 'the first principle that guides the re-installation must be to honour our founding direction'. The new installation of 2004 (in contrast to Tate Modern) does not even depart from Barr's principle of keeping the display of such media as photography and prints separate from painting and sculpture. Following Barr, the museum's display strategy is still to conceive of each gallery as autonomous yet connected to the larger story of the development of modern art. Although Elderfield acknowledges that the development

of modern art cannot be told as a single, linear and unified story, he continues the museum's 1930s tradition when he writes:

This display implies that it [the story of modern art] is a composition made of individual achievements, the product of individual artists, styles, and movements. Displayed in individual galleries, they function as the arguments and counter-arguments in the continually disputed history of what it means to make modern art.⁷⁵

Most importantly, however, the guiding principle of the new display is to give the visitor 'the best possible experience of the individual work of art... This re-installation is pledged, without qualification, to give to individual works the places and the companions that will cause us not only to think about them but to delight in them as well.'⁷⁶

Clearly there is little felt need at the Museum of Modern Art in New York for contemporary and modern art museums to change the way that they display their works. But museums of modern art elsewhere too – even those as different as the Guggenheim in Bilbao and Tate Modern – depart from their 1930s model in only three respects. First, there is now a widely shared recognition that the display of art should permit presentation in terms of multiple narratives, no single one of which represents a uniquely authoritative story. Instead of disempowering the curatorial voice, this strategy emphasises it, since thematic exhibitions are now the realm to which the curator-as-hero has perforce migrated.⁷⁷ Secondly, it is no longer acceptable that the museum should be presented as a secluded sanctuary disconnected from the wider world. For this reason, many more art museums now have windows, so placed that the spectator can put his or her art experience into some kind of geographical context.⁷⁸ In order to underline the museum's connection to city life, many museums have created a street to run through the museum – either by analogy, as Tate Modern has done with the Turbine Hall, or in actual fact, as in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Aarhus Kunstmuseum in Denmark.⁷⁹ Thirdly, the use of partitions has been practically eliminated. In an age in which so many contemporary artists create room-size installations rather than paintings, artificially inserting walls to increase hanging space for paintings is no longer part of museums' display strategy. This, however, does not mean that the museums have abandoned the search for a dynamic flow through their interior space as made possible by the introduction of partitions in the 1930s. On the contrary, much care is spent on the layout of the rooms to avoid the static appearance of an enfilade, with its monotonous, rhythmic repetition.

Shopping and the Museum: The Convergence of Two Experiences

But does the sameness of art museum interiors mean that the dominant art experience we are being offered is still based on the spectator as consumer? I believe so. In fact, there is an even closer affinity between shopping and museum experience today than there was in the 1930s. It is not so much a matter of the increasing space that museum shops take up within the museum, but of the way that the experience provided by galleries resembles what



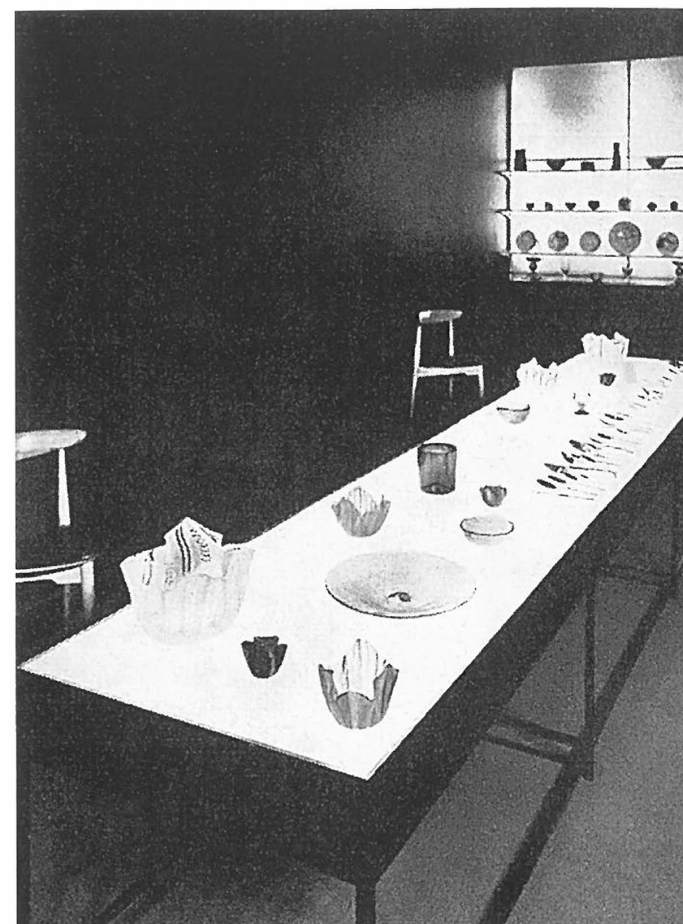
124 Rem Koolhaas, the Prada Epicenter Store on Broadway, New York, 2001.

is available commercially. The uncluttered hanging of art on sheer white walls, the hushed tone and silent escalators are by no means unique to the museum. On the contrary, the oak, sandstone or granite floors and costly glass and metal structures are elements of many designer boutiques in the USA and Europe – indeed, they are often designed by those very same architects who are employed by the museums.⁸⁰ A prime example is a highly entertaining and enjoyable space designed initially for the Guggenheim Museum in SoHo, New York, by the Dutch artist Rem Koolhaas. When the Guggenheim pulled out of the project, the Italian fashion house Prada took over the space with little alteration. The Prada shop opened on Broadway in December 2001. Koolhaas, who has studied the impact of shopping on the city with his students at the Harvard Design School,⁸¹ made a submission to the architectural competition for the Museum of Modern Art extension that drew on the shopping centre as a model of public behaviour. At the SoHo shop, on the other hand, gallery behaviour is brought to the commercial world (pl. 9 and pl. 124). As shoppers enter from Broadway and move downwards towards the lower floors, they are sometimes confronted with an enticing range of objects, and sometimes by a phalanx of mannequins marching upwards. Faced with these upright, slender and attractively Prada-clad figures, one finds oneself established as a player on a stage set by the architect. In the cellar very few goods are on display. In the spring of 2005 a single shoe was mounted on a pedestal with a museum-like notice that it should not be touched. Other goods are stored in rolling stacks to the sides and can be browsed like pictures in storage. As one emerges again at the top level – there are more goods hung sparsely towards the rear of the building – the shoppers are as conscious of their footsteps as if they were in a spacious museum. More successfully and radically than in any contemporary art gallery, Koolhaas has here articulated what it means to visit a museum or a shop through his architectural mise-en-scène. The two experiences converge. Both emphasise our sense of self; they are stages on which we present ourselves and by means of which we emulate style. Shopping is, as the blurb to the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* states, the last remaining form of public activity and the modern museum contributes towards its culture.



125 James Cubitt, Scandinavian furniture at the Finmar Furniture Showrooms in London, circa 1955. From Robert Gutmann and Alexander Koch, *Ladengestaltung / Shop Design* (Stuttgart: Alexander Koch, 1956), p. 120.

One might be inclined to think that the identification of the gallery experience and shopping is merely an idea received from the kind of cultural criticism fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw the hegemony of the commodity in all aspects of capitalist culture. But there is more to it than that. As we have seen, market ideals and business interests played an enormous role in the development of the Museum of Modern Art's conception of art spectatorship, and the relationship seems only to have intensified in the gallery world after the Second World War. Not only did the Museum of Modern Art set standards for display in art galleries post-1945, but it was also hugely influential on designer displays in the commercial world. When, for example, the British architect James Cubitt designed the showrooms for the Scandinavian design and furniture firm Finmar in London in the 1950s, he hung chairs on the wall, just as Barr had done in the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition, and displayed glassware on a spot-lit table in a darkened room as Johnson had done in the *Machine Art* exhibition (pls 125 and 126).⁸² But the convergence between exhibition culture and the world of consumer design became particularly intense in the *Docu-*



126 James Cubitt, Scandinavian glassware at the Finmar Furniture Showrooms in London, circa 1955. From Robert Gutmann and Alexander Koch, *Ladengestaltung / Shop Design* (Stuttgart: Alexander Koch, 1956), p. 121.

menta. Many features of Bode's inventive *Documenta* installations were first explored in his designs for commercial exhibitions.

Art galleries, however, have not explicitly embraced the parallel with commercial display in the way that they organise their collections. The consumer-spectator is the last thing that curators in modern art galleries would now say that they want to encourage. Today's museum directors are politically progressive and anti-elitist to a man (or, more rarely, a woman). If they spend their evenings in bow ties or long dresses charming their rich patrons, then this, they would say, is only in order to continue to be able to reach out more effectively to a public beyond that moneyed elite. Yet it seems no mere coincidence that the model of the spectator as consumer appeared at exactly those points where historians identify the origins of modern consumer society: in the US between the wars and in Europe after the Second World War.⁸³ What characterised those societies was that consumption had moved beyond necessities towards lifestyle goods, and that large sections of society beyond the privileged upper and upper-middle classes could now find social definition through acts



127 Austin-Smith: Lord, entrance to black box exhibition galleries at FACT in Liverpool, 2005.

of buying. Luxury goods consumption became a common leisure activity. It is only natural that the museum should have sought ways to address this new, style-conscious consumer.

However, to recognise the importance of such consumerist attitudes for the gallery is not simply to lament the decline of the serious art spectator.⁸⁴ Unlike many of the critics of the consumer society,⁸⁵ I do not believe that the consumer-spectator is a helpless, manipulated victim; nor, in pursuing this kind of a public, are museums simply tools for sinister capitalist interests. Rather, both galleries and shops participate in the shaping of a public space that fulfils a function at a particular place and moment in time. Just as the creation of educated, cosmopolitan citizens was thought to be necessary to the emerging nation-states in the nineteenth century, and the cultivation of the individual's inner, sensuous self *circa* 1900, so the model of the extrovert, sophisticated consumer played an important role in the twentieth century. The hope was that the museum could help to create a world of shared values and sharpen the public's sense of quality. In short, consumption was fashioned into a civic duty. But as with all models of identification there are dangers. Between the almost ludic pleasure of fashioning one's self in Koolhaas's environment and the self-reification that comes when the consumer loses him or herself in that identity, there is a fine line. More-

over, as economists begin to speak of the limits to consumer markets – the rapid rise of consumption in Asia is not balanced by a reduction in the Western industrialised world, as is necessary if the resources of the earth are to sustain such growth.

Perhaps the greatest innovation in art galleries has been the need to adapt to the emergence of new media such as film, videos, DVDs and the Internet. New museums are currently fitted with electric cabling in order to be able to turn 'white cubes' into 'black boxes' for the display of such work. The introduction of the black box into the museum, and even the creation of entire black box museum buildings like FACT in Liverpool (pl. 127) – dedicated solely to the commissioning and display of so-called new media – is perhaps the most radical transformation of the museum interior in the last hundred years. But does it also signal a new conception of art viewing? Does the black box signal the end of the consumer-spectator? I will turn to this question in Chapter Six, the conclusion.

electric
cabling
→ to turn
'white cubes' into
'black boxes'



The idea that museums were backward-, not forward-looking institutions has been a feature of the way in which they have been thought about from the time of their first foundation. The British artist John Constable, for example, expressed the fear that the foundation of the National Gallery in London would produce a taste for the art of the past at the expense of the present. 'Should there be a National Gallery (which is talked of)', he declared, 'there will be an end of the art in poor old England, and she will become, in all that relates to painting, as much a nonentity as every other country that has one.'¹ Many others have had similar thoughts. In 1842 the German philosopher Friedrich Theodor Vischer described museums as 'beautiful graves', institutions for collectors, not creators.² Vischer's metaphor would be echoed by subsequent writers, from El Lissitzky in the 1920s to Theodor W. Adorno in the 1950s, who famously referred to museums as 'mausoleums'.³ But a more recent collection of essays by Boris Groys strikes a new note. According to Groys, 'the museum as the traditional place of art . . . is increasingly perceived as outdated and appears as the poor relation of the media'.⁴ No longer are museums presented as a threat to cultural life; they themselves are threatened – above all by the dominance of the new media.

The idea that we might live at the end of the museum age does not seem all that surprising. After all, we live at a time when the shelves of bookshops are full of titles announcing the end of this or that. If there is a common thread to all these endings – apart from the need to capture the attention of the book-buyer with a dramatic title – it seems to be the idea that those grand developmental narratives characteristic of the modernist view of history are no longer tenable. From this point of view, it should not be surprising if the same fate awaits the museum, for museums were plainly closely associated with such narratives. The first great museums were founded by the new nation-states of the nineteenth century to act as repositories of their individual cultural histories. In the national galleries of the nineteenth century, artworks were separated according to country and period and displayed in a manner that (ideally, at least) allowed the visitor to trace a lineage from the

cultural achievements of the early Italian Renaissance to those contemporary works produced by the nation in question. As grand developmental accounts of history have come to be rejected, so too has the museum, it seems, come to the end of its mission. Hence the valedictory tone of much recent writing on the museum – a collection of essays appeared in 1996 with the title *The End(s) of the Museum*, while *At the End of the Museal Age* is the subtitle of Boris Groys's book published a year later.⁵

Yet from another point of view these obituaries seem very much out of place, since the plain fact is that there has been a vast expansion in the number of art museums in Europe and North America since the 1980s. Each year record numbers of visitors are reported.⁶ From the spectacular forms of Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao to the quieter, more contemplative architecture of Renzo Piano's Fondation Beyeler in Basel, or Taniguchi's remodelled Museum of Modern Art in New York, each opening is featured internationally on television news programmes, reported in the newspapers and given expert attention in specialist magazines and conferences. To judge by all this, one might think that the museum age was dawning rather than drawing to a close.

It is precisely this media attention, however, that is, in Groys's view, responsible for the slow death of the museum. The fact that museum openings are media events confirms the fact that an experience of art is only to be had in an indirect form. For him,

The media value of art, particularly in our own time, is however not identical with an experience intrinsic to art. The art-intrinsic experience – i.e. essentially purely formal artistic decisions – do not interest today's public. . . The media today are only interested in names that are already familiar.⁷

According to Groys, not only is the museum endangering itself by the way it markets itself in newspapers, radio programmes and television, but it is also threatened from within by the growth of new media artworks. It is true that in recent years works on video and DVD have been accepted by galleries of contemporary art in great numbers and, without doubt, their presence transforms the museum. The continuous images of video and DVD projections cannot be taken in in the same manner as paintings, sculptures, drawings or even photographs. Museum visitors who normally walk at a leisurely pace through the rooms, stopping here and there and following their whim, are forced to sit in projection rooms for much longer than they would remain standing in front of a picture if they wish to see the whole of a work. Alternatively, the visitor can do no more than dip in and out of the darkened spaces to gain an overview of what is on display. In that case, they can take away at best a partial impression of any individual work.⁸ Thus, Groys argues, the last public space of contemplation in which spectators are self-directed and self-determined disappears.

The development of new media has always produced anxieties of redundancy in the art world alongside euphoric proclamations of revolution. In the nineteenth century it was often claimed that photography, by virtue of its superior capacity for mimetic depiction of the world, would do away with painting. Likewise, in the 1950s it was said that the introduction of the domestic television set would mean the end of cinema. More recently, similar claims have been made for the computer in relation to traditional art forms. For some,

Internet art represents the realisation of some of the most cherished hopes of the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century.⁹ It has been said that Internet art makes art democratically accessible in a way that museums promised to do but never did in practice, for, unlike the museum, Internet art is not tied to an elite space. Moreover, to an even greater degree than any of the art installations of the 1970s, Internet art can realise the anti-commercial agenda of the politically radical avant-garde because it eliminates the difference between original and copy. Most of all, however, Internet art is said to be interactive and process-oriented in contrast to those forms of art whose sole purpose is to create a product for a certain market.¹⁰ Groys, however, disagrees. In his view, Internet art cannot rise above 'classicism', inasmuch as the computer artist can only establish him- or herself as distinct from a skilled programmer by drawing on other, pre-existing art forms and modes of aesthetic appreciation.¹¹

Although substitution theories have consistently accompanied the advent of new media in the art world, history shows that they have yet to materialise as reality. Photography has not replaced painting; television has not done away with the cinema visit; and there is no more reason to believe that the new media will make the art museum redundant. Rather, in each instance, a fruitful exchange developed between the old and the new artistic forms. Thus, for example, the English Pre-Raphaelites developed an interpretive hyper-realism above and beyond what contemporary photography could then achieve, while the latter made use of quintessentially painterly forms such as the historical tableau and the artfully arranged and lit still life. I believe that something similar is already taking place in the case of the new media and the museum.

First of all, it is important to note that for many new media artists the museum is the most suitable (in some cases, the only) space in which their work can be shown. Most of those who have encountered Internet art will have done so first at a public exhibition (*Documenta 11* in 2002, for example), rather than surfing on their home computers.¹² Avant-garde film, too, is now principally to be found in art galleries. Isaac Julien, for example, who first came to public notice in the late 1980s and early 1990s with experimental television films such as *The Attendant* and *Young Soul Rebels*, now shows his work almost exclusively in museums. According to Julien, the expansion in the number of commercial television channels in the second half of the 1990s put pressure on public broadcasters to keep up their audience numbers, with the result that they were no longer willing to support the less-popular experiments of independent filmmakers. At the same time, however, independent filmmakers started to be wooed by art galleries as the latter in turn were asked to justify the receipt of public money by increasing and broadening their public.¹³ Film projection in the museum seemed to hold out the possibility of reaching a younger, less traditionally educated audience.

Important though the pressure to increase visitor numbers and to address social groups beyond the traditional museum-goers has been, it is not what concerns me here. Rather, my question is how the entry of new media into the art gallery has changed the gallery experience itself. Has our perception of what we encounter in the museum and our behaviour as spectators changed as a result of the new media? This might well be the case. The metamorphosis of gallery rooms into black boxes for the display of works in new

media will in the long run probably produce more radical changes in our gallery-going experience than did even the spread of the white functional gallery space.

Invisible in the Museum

In *Documenta 11*, held from 8 June to 15 September in Kassel in 2002, thirty-four video projects were shown, more than ever before. The duration of the twenty-two films came to 3,721 minutes, or sixty-two hours. On top of this must be added the nine works whose running time was not recorded in the catalogue, and two real-time contributions as well as a thirteen-part TV documentary drama from the group Igloolik that was shown continuously on various monitors in the entrance hall to one of the exhibition spaces.¹⁴ To see everything, then, one would have had to spend more than sixty-two hours in the exhibition. But the average visitor rarely had more than a day to view all the works, that is, at most ten hours (the three exhibition buildings opened at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 8.00 p.m.).¹⁵ During these ten hours the visitors would have been more or less aware that they not only had to view thirty-four film projections, but also the works of the other one hundred artists in the exhibition. In this situation the spectator is effectively forced to decide between two modes of viewing: one that is selective and concentrated on a few chosen works, and one that is comprehensive and surveys all exhibits in the show but remains by nature superficial. It is reasonable to assume, I think, that most visitors would have chosen the second mode of viewing, the survey, because it is hard to be selective if one does not know the artists and works on display. In each case, however, the experience of the exhibition would have remained fragmentary. The dream of the autonomous, self-directed spectator and the idea that the well-ordered museum display should present the visitor with a comprehensive panorama of cultural progression are no longer on offer. The film projections of the new media artists have certainly done a great deal to undermine the possibility of any such cultural survey. Moreover, instead of works of art that can enter into dialogue with other objects on display, film projections require darkened rooms in which they monopolise the spectator's attention. This is a very serious problem for exhibition curators. From the time of Eastlake's curatorship in the National Gallery, the curator's skill has been seen to lie in the way that he or she places works of art in a meaningful relation to each other.¹⁶ The aim has been to develop new and convincing views of particular works by placing them in illuminating contexts. New media projects are typically very greedy in their demand for space – many of the installations of Bill Viola and Pipilotti Rist, for example, require entire rooms – and they implicitly exclude other exhibits. Their installation is sealed off from the rest of the exhibition: in order for the black boxes to exist in the traditional museum, visitors often have to pass through a narrow corridor that has been inserted within the space of the galleries. They then open a heavy, dark curtain before entering the soundproof and carpeted enclave in which the work is to be viewed. Once inside, one can sit down and make oneself comfortable on the floor or on a bench as if nothing outside really existed. As in the cinema, the darkness and the enclosed space work together to make us forget the immediacy of our bodies and

to encourage us towards projection into the images on the screen that shine brightly in the dark void.

But, one might object, this kind of isolation of the spectator from contact with the world outside is far from being a new feature of the experience of the art gallery. As early as 1848 the British writer Charles Kingsley expressed a view of the museum as a place of retreat where the worn-out worker might replenish his senses away from the arduous toil of everyday life (see Chapter One). Likewise, in 1976 Brian O'Doherty identified the white cube as a means of isolating both the exhibited work and the attention of the viewer from the exigencies of the outside world (see Chapter Four). O'Doherty claimed that in this way the white cube art gallery produced a quasi-religious mode of viewing. While O'Doherty was writing, artists such as Beuys, Oldenburg and Warhol were mounting a sustained critique of the white cube (see Chapter Five), culminating in such actions as the wrapping of the entire Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1969 by the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Now, as I have argued in this book, the museum was never a hermetically sealed space separated from everyday concerns – throughout history it was shaped by contemporary aesthetic beliefs, political debates and market forces – but it is significant that artists in the 1960s should have come to see it in this way. Their objective (like the avant-garde artists in the 1920s) was to produce art that would not be cut off from the contingencies of life but would instead confront the viewer with them. 'Art's self-referential examination became, almost overnight, an examination of its social and economic context', writes O'Doherty of the 1960s (although with some exaggeration).¹⁷ As in the case of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, when they wrapped the museum, artists had now begun to see their role not so much as one of creating meaningful objects, as of making 'gestures', ones that would re-connect the viewer with the world in a novel way. No escape into a separate realm – the world of art – was allowed; rather, the aim was art that would produce a conscious engagement with the social environment.

The critic and art historian Michael Fried attacked the way in which artists in their efforts to link the art experience with the everyday world turned their attention away from the art objects themselves and towards their effect on the viewers. In his famous article of 1967, 'Art and Objecthood', he argued that this undermined the traditional mode of viewing art, which relied on internal coherence and the object's independence of the beholder's experience of the world.¹⁸ Artists like Robert Morris, however, put every effort into making the work entirely dependent on the viewers and their experience. They showed work that had no intrinsic interest as a visual experience, but acquired it only derivatively, through the presence of the viewer. For example, Morris's exhibition at the Green Gallery, New York, in 1965 showed three perfectly identical objects, the *L-Beams*. The beams were not particularly interesting or exciting in themselves – no more or less so than the materials on a building site. The fact that the spectators had to confront this inherent meaninglessness, however, forced them to become more aware of their own presence as observers. Perception of the work became possible only through an awareness of the differential relations of its constituents to the spectators' own bodies: in this way, three identical industrially manufactured pieces come to be perceived as different elements within a complex experience. The lying *L*, for example, seems heavier and smaller in comparison with the

vertical one and the triangular *L* appears more dynamic than the other two. These are perceptions that have nothing to do with the objects as such, but owe everything to the experiential perspective of the viewer. Ultimately, the effect of the work is that it forces the viewer to reflect on his or her perceptions and their context. It is this responsibility and self-reflectiveness on the part of the art viewer that the black boxes of the new media projections undermine. In this sense at least the black box simply repeats what the white cube has, according to O'Doherty, already initiated. In O'Doherty's view, the white cube produced an experience of art that was disembodied and quasi-sacred at the expense of the viewer's situatedness in the world.

Yet, as I argued in Chapter Four, the white cube never existed. It is true that there were white walls in the art gallery – they were introduced into German museums in the 1930s, taken up by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and spread to galleries all over the rest of the Western world – but the object of giving museums their uniformly white walls was never to create the enclosed space of a cube. They were meant, rather, to produce a flowing and open space that would be flexible and adaptable. Far from being removed from the world, the ideal spectator for such a space would be one who would also take an active part in the contemporary world of consumption. O'Doherty's idea of the gallery as an isolated white cube was a fiction invented at just that point in the 1960s when many artists (including O'Doherty himself) came to understand their artistic practice as a form of institutional critique. The image of the museum as a sealed container from which the artist could break out offered a powerful target. Similar critiques of the museum are still influential in the art world, and, indeed, have been significantly revived in recent years.¹⁹

Towards New Spaces of Experience

At the end of 2005 the German art magazine *Texte zur Kunst* dedicated an issue to the legacy of institutional critique. Among the contributions was an interview with Roger M. Buergel, the artistic director of *Documenta 12*, held in Kassel in the summer of 2007. One of its main themes was the way in which Buergel, his co-curator Ruth Noack and their team were trying to link the activities of the museum with other discursive activities.²⁰ Thus, as Buergel explained, several global discussion forums were launched in preparation for the opening of the exhibition in Kassel. In addition, the team worked with more than seventy print and online periodicals throughout the world in order to help develop themes for the *Documenta*. Such attempts to link the content of an exhibition with concerns outside the immediate exhibition context are by no means unusual. Indeed, one of Buergel's predecessors as director of the *Documenta*, the French curator Catherine David, organised a show in Berlin for which the artworks themselves were the least important aspect. Its theme was to investigate contemporary representations of Arabs and by Arabs. David argued that:

the point of the event cannot be to provide a comprehensive overview of current cultural production in the various countries of an extremely contrast-rich and multifarious region. Rather the aim is to trace several levels of reflection, taking the artists' works as a starting point, with an eye to the discourses of the recent and more distant past.²¹

Thus David chose to concentrate on documentary films and photographs as well as on talks by experts on the societies, cultures and political problems of the Middle East. Events like this are admirable in the radicalism with which they acknowledge that art galleries are institutions that are limited in their cultural significance. Outside the Western industrialised world, art galleries hold little attraction for the majority of citizens and the creation of art is a marginal activity in the formation of cultural consciousness. By concentrating on discourse rather than objects, curators such as David are also trying to sidestep the all-too-powerful influence of the art market, an aspect of the art world that was strongly contested by the institutional critique of the 1960s. Yet there are also dangers in events of this kind. Although they are intended to encourage the audience to form opinions on important political issues that are poorly represented in the press or the media, the end result is hardly that of a participatory dialogue. Westerners have limited experience with the issues under discussion and so they passively absorb lectures by experts, eyewitnesses or others whose first-hand engagement gives them a claim to authority. In Europe and North America, the audience's remoteness and lack of knowledge can all too easily produce an attitude of cultural voyeurism, ethical self-righteousness or a mere confirmation of the original impotence. Either way, one of the most important possibilities for the art museum in the twenty-first century loses its force: the active, self-directed engagement of the spectators with whatever is displayed in the museum. One great advantage of the gallery room over the lecture hall is that visitors are encouraged to pick their own way through whatever arguments are put on view by the museum staff. In contrast to the one-way communication of a talk given by an expert, visitors to museums have been free to spend as long as they wish in front of any single object and at the same time to pass others by.

This self-determination has always been a fundamental strength of art galleries, a positive consequence of their foundation in the wake of the French Revolution. Yet, as I have argued in this book, only rarely was this self-directed viewing subject conceived as engaged in a collective activity. Mostly, the museum accepted and reinforced the *principium individuationis* that has dominated modern Western societies. With the exception of the intersubjective social space explored by El Lissitzky and some of the Bauhaus architects and designers in the late 1920s and 1930s, viewing subjects have been addressed as isolated individuals. In recent years, however, a loose group of artists has emerged that once again rejects the individualism informing the relationship between work of art and viewer. Instead, these artists set up situations in galleries in which viewers are encouraged to come together as social groups. Supported by such influential curators as Hans Ulrich Obrist, Hou Hanru and Nicolas Bourriaud, there are many contemporary artists whose work takes the form of an active engagement with the gallery visitor rather than simply producing objects or installations for their contemplation.

Rirkrit Tiravanija, for example, has explored the significance of the social conventions surrounding the shared consumption of food by cooking vegetable curry or pad Thai noodles for people attending his shows. He has also reconstructed his New York apartment and installed it in galleries for the use of visitors.²² People had access twenty-four hours a day to all the amenities of a home in a public space and would come into contact with each other as they prepared food in the kitchen (from ingredients provided by the

gallery), slept in the bed or watched television and relaxed in the living room. The French critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud has given this kind of contemporary art practice the name *esthétique relationnelle* – ‘relational aesthetic’.²³ According to Bourriaud, what is crucial to the work of artists like Tiravanija, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe, Christine Hill and others is that ‘inter-subjectivity not only represents the social setting for the reception of [their] art, which is its “environment”, its “field” (Bourdieu), but also becomes the quintessence of artistic practice’.²⁴ In contrast to the univocal structures accepted by those curators like Catherine David whose purpose is to use the space of the gallery to raise awareness of urgent political issues, such artists work to develop what Umberto Eco has called ‘communicative situations’.²⁵ Yet it is not difficult to see that this attempt to create a relational social space within the context of the art gallery has sharp limitations. On one level, the scenarios created by these artists, however striking and provocative, remain empty gestures. While some people have used Tiravanija’s food and eaten, slept and chatted in his gallery installations, most visitors merely pass through the space and watch what is going on in it with detached amusement. As Claire Bishop has argued, the communities supposed to be created by such works of art are at best purposeless. At worst, however, they reproduce the kind of empty and artificial, feel-good atmosphere of a television reality show, with no relation to the divided and fractious societies we live in outside the gallery’s walls.²⁶

Bourriaud is convinced that what distinguishes today’s quest for active spectators from similar efforts by avant-garde artists in the 1920s and 1960s is the absence of utopian aspirations. Instead of trying to create new social environments, the goal today is merely that of ‘learning to inhabit the world in a better way’.²⁷ But perhaps this is not enough. Perhaps it is time to revive the idea of the art gallery as a privileged public space. A very admirable first step in this direction was taken in 2007 by the curators of *Documenta 12*, Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack. Each of the exhibition venues drew on a different historical model of display. The Museum Fridericianum’s flowing curtains, for example, alluded to Bode’s spectacular installations at the first *Documenta* in 1955. The Neue Galerie’s red and green enfilade rooms harked back to the original nineteenth-century museum interior of this building (see Chapter Two, pl. 19). A nearby exhibition hall cited the 1980s when such halls were fashionable, and a tent in the meadows experimented, even if it failed, with a new transient and nomadic mode of exhibiting. Noticeably absent was the most common form of display, the white spaces of contemporary art galleries. At a most basic level, viewers became aware that different forms of exhibiting affected their responses to the works on display. What was missing, however, was a reflection on the different concepts of spectatorship implied by each mode. Thus the diversity of display was for most people no more than an attractive new form of interior decoration. There was, however, also a concerted effort to move away from such a consumer attitude in the gallery. A range of different and quite radical visitor discussion forums was offered inside the gallery in an attempt to replace individual contemplation with collective forms of reception (pl. 128). At the heart of this lies an effort to create an ideal public realm through common aesthetic reception. The French philosopher Jacques Rancière has influentially championed a similar notion in recent years.²⁸ It goes back to Friedrich Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, first published in 1795 (see Chapter One). Rancière suggests that new kinds



128 Ai Wei Wei, *1001 Stühle* at the *Documenta 12* in Kassel, 2007.

of artworks are able to create new communities and ways for people to relate to one another. For him, this gives them a productive relation to politics. The problem with this is that Rancière assumes, much like Schiller did before him, that aesthetic reception is miraculously capable of producing social cohesion and harmony. It seems to me that it would be more productive to emphasise the respect of difference and dissent that is demonstrated in the Schlegels’ fictional gallery visit to Dresden published in the journal *Athenaeum* in 1799 (discussed in Chapter One). Although in the end the Schlegels also advocate Schiller’s notion of an aesthetic community that transcends the fragmented and divided societies of modern times, there is no reason why we need to follow them to this conclusion. It seems sufficient to point out that difference is more easily accepted in reflections on works of art than elsewhere. This means that a level of self-awareness and awareness of others can be achieved in the gallery that is otherwise often elusive.

To my mind, Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy experimented with this kind of dialogic reflection when they designed the pavilion for the building firm AHAG in 1929 (pls

61 and 62). As its clear and informative layout shows, rational argument was the principal aim of the pavilion and its installation. But it conveys its information to the spectator primarily by means of images. Thus it is not subject to the charge of excessively privileging mastery of the linguistic domain, as Jürgen Habermas's equally rational, but language-based model of the ideal democratic public sphere does.²⁹ Yet, as is the case in Habermas's own conception, the idea here is not to manipulate the viewer – as happened later in the more spectacular exhibitions staged by El Lissitzky and Bayer in the 1930s and 1940s. Rather, as the critic Adolf Behne observed, it allows the viewer to assess the material 'from different sides'.³⁰ This, however, is only one of two modes of exhibition that could be productively rediscovered today. It is most suitable for exhibitions whose goal is principally to inform rather than to create an aesthetic experience. For the latter, I think, Lissitzky's 'Abstract Cabinet' is exemplary (pl. 5). As in Tiravanija's scenarios, Lissitzky hoped to create an environment that would encourage visitors to experience themselves as collective beings. This experience was not dependent on common knowledge on the part of the spectators or the fact that they shared a social background but was produced by sensory perception of the environment. Unlike the environments created by Tiravanija, the 'Abstract Cabinet' was not a banal everyday structure bare of content. On the contrary, it offered a congenial and respectful environment for the display of abstract art by other artists. The room's significance lay in the way it transformed the experience of artworks from being a matter of individual contemplation into a collective activity. Where Tiravanija merely gives members of the public the possibility of meeting one another while doing everyday things in an unusual context, Lissitzky brought them together in the pursuit of a common aim. Since one person's decision of what to see affected the view of others, the process of reception required an awareness of other people's viewpoints. The common aim of viewing the work on display was, however, not just given, but required negotiation between the people who met by chance in the room. These two examples from the history of display give a glimpse, I think, of what could be possible inside galleries. Both of these display strategies, it is worth noting, work with essentially visual means; they are not dependent on the multiplicity of information boards, catalogues, audio guides and lectures that today's museums employ in the name of making their content democratically accessible.

As things stand, however, there is little of such gallery-room innovation in today's museums. *Documeta 12* was an exception in this respect. Neither David's lecture-based exhibition format nor Bourriaud's relational aesthetics have seriously called the rather uniform interior of the contemporary art museum into question. We are hardly challenged in our accustomed habits as consumers when we walk at a leisurely pace through stylish and generously proportioned gallery rooms whose dimensions disappear in the magic glow of the white walls' reflection. While both David's and Bourriaud's models withhold the visual pleasures that the consumer-spectator takes to be his or her due – the one by withholding art, the other by staging itself in deliberately ramshackle and bare structures³¹ – neither presupposes viewing subjects capable of exercising independent thought or interdependent agency. In the one we are, at best, sympathetic witnesses to events that do not concern us directly; in the other we are teased by a new form of entertainment that has a shorter half-life than a Hollywood summer blockbuster.

Even if the spectator experience that is implicit in David's and Bourriaud's exhibitions is not a collective and intersubjective one, however, it still continues the tradition of the self-determined gallery-goer who comes and chooses what he or she would like to view. This is the space of action that the visitors have as a matter of course as they move through the museum. It is just this kind of freedom to make connections at will that is taken away by the isolation forced on the spectator by contemporary film, video and DVD installations. Their dark rooms cut off the spectators from one another and eliminate the possibility of their experience being part of a dialogue with other works in the museum. Moreover, the introduction of the bodiless, lost-to-the-world cinema spectator into the art gallery does away with the last public space in which cultural reception can take place as an engaged process together with others. One very rarely visits museums alone and there has never been a rule in museums that says that one should remain silent in front of works of art. In fact, pictures of gallery rooms in the nineteenth century, like Giuseppe Gabrielli's *Room 32 in the National Gallery* of 1886 (pl. 3), seem to emphasise the social aspects of art reception. Yet, as is evident from the pictures elsewhere in this book, by 1900 this expectation had changed. The convention now appears to be that images of gallery interiors and exhibition shots should be bare and empty, without any trace of a visitor. Unlike Boris Groys (and many others), I do not fear the introduction of new media into the art gallery because they represent a threat to the gallery as a space of contemplation.³² Rather, it is the disappearance of what is – potentially, at least – a space of public interaction and communication that I would regret.

Not all new media, however, exclude the possibility of common reception. It is still not clear what significance Internet art will have for the museum. The café atmosphere that arises when the museum tries to make a space for Internet art is intriguing. Whether the future development of this medium will take the museum further in this direction, or whether there will be some development based on one or other of the historical alternatives that I have identified in this book, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that the contemplative museum is not the only model at our disposal. In the absence of other public spaces that offer the possibility of a similarly free and open-ended form of communication, it might be wise to invest time, money and energy into different forms of display. Unlike the institutional critique of the 1960s, I do not think that it is necessary for art to leave the museum in order to connect with life in a socially and politically meaningful way. On the contrary, I think the museum is a uniquely privileged place, at least in the Western industrial world, for the exploration of issues relating to human social interaction, all the more so because of the size and variety of its constituency. But film, video and DVD projections, at least as they are shown at present, do not contribute to this. Instead, the way in which they are installed continues to reaffirm the idea of the museum as a space apart, a space of private contemplation.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 I use the words *museum* and *gallery* interchangeably throughout the book. While in English-speaking countries the latter is more often than not used to designate art collections and the former to indicate any other, from natural history to ancient coins, this is not the case in Europe. Even in English, museum is the larger category of which art galleries are a more specialised sub-genre.
- 2 Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', in, Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan, eds, *Literary Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 89; James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 210.
- 3 Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* [1853], London: Penguin, 2004, p. 222.
- 4 Julian Barnes, *Metroland* [1980], London: Picador, 1990, pp. 3–5.
- 5 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on the Accommodation of the National Gallery*, Parliamentary Papers 15, London: House of Commons, 1850, p. 6.
- 6 James Stephen, *The Memoirs of James Stephen: Written by Himself for the Use of His Children*, ed. Merle M. Bevington, London: Hogarth Press, 1954, pp. 343–60.
- 7 According to David Solkin, the behaviour was entirely consistent with the highly sexualised atmosphere at the Royal Academy (David H. Solkin, 'Introduction', in Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at*

Somerset House, 1780–1836, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 8).

- 8 In Season Four (1998), Episode 66.
- 9 Although there are many cross-fertilisations between the art gallery and the arts and crafts museum, the natural history museum and the history museum, each institution has also developed its own set of purposes and structuring principles, which justify their separate treatment. So, for example, the improvement of crafts skills remained an overriding objective in the arts and crafts museum in the nineteenth century when it had ceased to be used as a justification for the existence of the art gallery. Natural history museums, on the other hand, did not stake a claim to people's attention with unique objects but precisely due to the typicality of their specimens. This gives them a somewhat different agenda that has recently been impressively charted by Carla Yanni, *Nature's Museums: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005; also Sharon Macdonald, ed., *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, London: Routledge, 1998. For a discussion of the concept of authenticity in the art gallery see David Phillips, *Exhibiting Authenticity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- 10 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, pp. 27–8.
- 11 Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York: Knopf, 2003. I am grate-

ful to Sheryl Kroen for drawing my attention to this book. Her review article has been a most helpful guide on the history of the consumer: Sheryl Kroen, 'A Political History of the Consumer', *Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2004), pp. 709–36.

- 12 Martin Jay has recently charted the undeniably central role that the concept of experience has played in a wide range of theoretical debates in Europe and North America since the seventeenth century. From natural philosophy to aesthetics and history, experience emerges in Jay's account as a crucial concept in a surprisingly large body of systematic enquiry: Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- 13 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Introduction to the Human Sciences: An Attempt to Lay a Foundation for the Study of Society and History* [1883], trans. and ed. Ramon J. Betanzos, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988, p. 73.
- 14 Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17 (Summer 1991), p. 797.
- 15 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, chapter 2.
- 16 This has been the tenor of a collection of essays by leading art gallery directors of an older generation brought together by James Cuno, ed., *Whose Muse?: Art Museums and the Public Trust*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- 17 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, London: Routledge, 1995. A similarly Foucauldian account of the museum is provided in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1992. Also: Donald Preziosi, 'Modernity Again: The Museum as Trompe L'Oeil', in Peter Brunette and David Wills, eds, *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 141–50; Donald Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums and the Phantasms of Modernity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, and Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. A pioneering article with regard to the study of museums in general and as spaces of civilising rituals in new secular societies has been Carol

Duncan and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History*, vol. 3 (December 1980), pp. 448–69.

- 18 Pierre Bourdieu, *L'Amour de l'art: les musées d'art européens et leur public*, Paris: Minuit, 1985. The English translation appeared as Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- 19 The literature with regard to particular institutions is immense and constantly growing. I will mention the articles and books related to my discussion in the individual chapters. A useful anthology of seminal museum studies texts appeared in 2004: Bettina Messias Carbonell, ed., *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- 20 Walter Grasskamp, *Museumsgründer und Museumsstürmer: zur Sozialgeschichte des Kunstmuseums*, Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981; Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology*, London: Reaktion, 1989; Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1991; Philip Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art: Modern American Art in a Culture of Museums*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991; Douglas Crimp (with photographs by Louise Lawler), *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994; Walter Hochreiter, *Vom Musentempel zum Lernort: zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Museen, 1800–1914*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994; Marcia Pointon, ed., *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and North America*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994; Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, London: Routledge, 1994; Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994; Alexis Joachimides et al., eds, *Museumsinszenierungen: zur Geschichte der Institution des Kunstmuseums*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995; Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, London: Routledge, 1995; Gwendolyn Wright, ed., *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeol-*

- ogy, *Studies in the History of Art* 47, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996; Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham, eds, *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press / the Open University, 1999; Emma Barker, ed., *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press / the Open University, 1999; Susan A. Crane, *Museums and Memory*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000; Keith S. Thomson, *Treasures on Earth: Museums, Collections and Paradoxes*, London: Faber and Faber, 2002; Andrew McClellan, ed., *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003; Cuno, ed., *Whose Muse?*; Lutz Hieber, Stephan Moebius and Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, eds, *Kunst im Kulturkampf: zur Kritik der deutschen Museumskultur*, transcript, Bielefeld, 2005.
- 21 It seems that this is a direction that other researchers on collections are now taking too. So, for example, the authors in Robert Felfe's and Angelika Lozar's collection of essays, who for the most part focus on what they call the performative aspects of early modern collections (Robert Felfe and Angelika Lozar, eds, *Frühneuzeitliche Sammlungspraxis und Literatur*, Berlin: Lukas, 2006).
- 22 A pioneer was Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux: Paris, Venise, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Gallimard, 1987. An English translation appeared as *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800*, trans. Elisabeth H. Wiles-Portier, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990. Also: Susan A. Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000. In recent years there has been a tendency to turn away from the ideology-critical angle of museum studies literature and more attention is paid to the spellbinding qualities of what is collected. Heinrich Förster, *Sammler und Sammlung, oder das Herz in der Schachtel: ein Brevier nicht nur für Sammler*, Cologne: Salon, 1998; Anke te Heesen and Emma C. Spary, eds, *Sammeln als Wissen*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001; Julian Spalding, *The Poetic Museum: Reviewing Historic Collections*, Munich: Prestel, 2002; Anke te Heesen and Petra Lutz, eds, *Dingwelten: das Museum als Erkenntnisort*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2005.
- 23 The interior decoration of gallery and exhibition rooms is only beginning to receive close analysis. Groundbreaking was Martha Ward's 'Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 73 (December 1991), pp. 599–622. My research is greatly indebted to Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998; Alexis Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums, 1880–1940*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001; Marion Ackermann, *Farbige Wände: zur Gestaltung des Ausstellungsraumes von 1880 bis 1930*, Wolfrathshausen: Minerva, 2003. More recently, Victoria Newhouse published a beautiful book on the history of display that, like this book, begins essentially in the eighteenth century and finishes in the present. But in contrast to my historical perspective her approach is normative. She assesses the displays with regard to what can be learned about ideal conditions for particular works: Victoria Newhouse, *Art and the Power of Placement*, New York: Monacelli Press, 2005. The research on actual spaces has emerged at the same time as an alternative line of enquiry emphasises the opposite: the dematerialisation of interiors in the age of photography. This line of thought was initiated by Beatriz Colomina, who argues that modern interiors were not designed for living but for representation in the mass media: Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.
- 24 Reinhart Strecke, however, on the basis of a thorough study of the surviving documents, has recently called into question the sole authorship of Schinkel in the design of the Kaufhaus (*Anfänge und Innovation der preussischen Bauverwaltung*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2000, pp. 209–12).
- 25 On the fashion for period rooms in North America in the 1920s and 1930s, see Sally Anne Duncan, ed., 'The Period Room Debate and the Making of America's Public Art Museum', special issue of *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2005), pp. 227–301. On Bode's influence on the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (then the South Kensington Museum), see Malcolm Baker, 'Bode and Museum Display: The Arrangement of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum and the South Kensington Response', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, vol. 38 (1996), pp. 143–53.
- 26 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn, London: New Left Books, 1983, p. 113.
- 27 Lizabeth Cohen, 'The New Deal State and Citizen Consumers', in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judt, eds, *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 112–13.
- 28 Quoted in Cohen, 'The New Deal State and Citizen Consumers', p. 124.
- 29 Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judt, 'Introduction', in Strasser, McGovern and Judt, eds, *Getting and Spending*, p. 5.
- 30 Peter Brook in the programme for the play *Tierno Bokar*, Paris: Centre International de Créations Théâtrales, 2004.
- 31 Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point: Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration, 1946–1987*, London: Methuen, 1988, p. 239.
- 32 Kevin McAleer and others have pointed out to me that sporting events fulfil the same function. Bullfights, for example, elicit, according to McAleer, a constant stream of comments from their spectators. I do think, however, that events like this differ from art galleries in important respects. While artworks open up a great variety of issues of social and cultural relevance, the great attraction of sporting events is that they are totally absorbing. It is the offer of communication about the former that I think makes museums into particular social spaces.
- 1 The Spectator as Citizen
- 1 This satire comes from *Fun* (4 April 1868), p. 38.
- 2 For a discussion of this and the increasing criticism of the commercial aspect of art exhibitions in England, see Andrew Hemingway, 'Art Exhibitions as Leisure-Class Rituals in Early Nineteenth-Century London', in Brian Allan, ed., *Towards a Modern Art World*, Studies in British Art 1, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 95–108.
- 3 Charles Kingsley, *His Letters and Memories of His Life* [1877], ed. Fanny Kingsley, vol. 1, London: MacMillan, 1890, p. 129.
- 4 For a discussion of many of them, see Gwendolyn Wright, ed., *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology*, Studies in the History of Art 47, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996.
- 5 Eastlake first received recognition as an artist (he was elected Royal Academician in 1830), but subsequently became known as a skilled arts administrator when he was appointed to the Commission on the Fine Arts (1842) set up to inquire into the decoration of the newly rebuilt Palace of Westminster. In 1843 he became keeper and in 1855 director of the National Gallery (David Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).
- 6 This remained a constant issue throughout the nineteenth century. After many years of pressure, British art in the National Gallery was greatly increased in 1847 when Robert Vernon, an Army contractor in horses, bequeathed his collection of 157 works by British artists to the nation (although it found no space in the building in Trafalgar Square and was never displayed there). It formed, however, the nucleus for the formation of the National Gallery for British Art (Tate Gallery) that was established at Millbank as an offshoot from the National Gallery in 1897 (Frances Spalding, *The Tate: A History*, London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1998).
- 7 Kingsley, *His Letters*, vol. 1, p. 137.
- 8 The Marquis of Stafford's gallery opened in 1806, the first of several private collections in Britain that were made available for regular public viewing. In Germany and Italy, however, the situation was different. Here a number of aristocratic galleries began to open their doors more freely to the general public towards the end of the eighteenth century (see Bénédicte Savoy, ed., *Tempel der Kunst: die Entstehung des öffentlichen Museum in Deutschland, 1701–1815*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2001). Yet London was infinitely more populous than any other European city – by 1801 the one million mark was already passed. The Marquis of Stafford was overwhelmed by the numbers of visitors to his

- home. As a result he rapidly reintroduced a restricted admission policy: once again, only people known to the owner were admitted. For a comprehensive discussion of this and other private and public galleries in Britain, see Giles Waterfield, ed., *Palaces of Art: Art Galleries in Britain, 1790–1990*, exh. cat., Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 1991, p. 75.
- 9 Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origin of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
 - 10 Debora J. Meijers, *Kunst als Natur: die Habsburger Gemäldegalerie in Wien um 1780*, Schriften des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien 2, Vienna: Skira, 1995, p. 73.
 - 11 Rudolf Distelberger, 'The Habsburg Collections in Vienna during the Seventeenth Century', in Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, eds, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, London: House of Stratus, 2001, pp. 51–61.
 - 12 Meijers, *Kunst als Natur*, p. 73.
 - 13 Roger de Piles, *Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture*, Paris: François Muguet, 1677; and *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*, Paris: Nicolas Langlois, 1699.
 - 14 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark, 2nd edn, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 43–5.
 - 15 For a wide-ranging discussion of the Royal Academy exhibitions, see David H. Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780–1836*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001.
 - 16 Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1971, pp. 147–71.
 - 17 Martini's engraving is of one of five drawings by Johann Heinrich Ramberg of Royal Academy exhibitions that are now in the British Museum in London.
 - 18 Ralph Hyde, *Panoramania! Art and Entertainment of the 'All-Embracing' View*, exh. cat., Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1988, pp. 24–9.
 - 19 Panoramas, dioramas and similar shows have been the subject of many studies, often because of their relationship to the contemporary invention of photography or because they are seen as forerunners of cinema: Robert Altick, *The Shows of London*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978; Heinz Buddemeier, *Panorama, Diorama, Photographie: Entstehung und Wirkung neuer Medien im 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich: W. Fink, 1970; Helmut Gernsheim and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre: The History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1956; Hyde, *Panoramania!*; Stephan Oettermann, *Das Panorama*, Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1980; R. Derek Wood, 'The Diorama in Great Britain in the 1820s', *History of Photography*, vol. 17 (Autumn 1993), pp. 284–95.
 - 20 For various reviews and responses to the panoramas, dioramas and cosmoramas, see Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 185–94.
 - 21 Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 189.
 - 22 Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping, 1800–1914*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964, pp. 11–23.
 - 23 Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping*, pp. 18–19.
 - 24 Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 167.
 - 25 By the time that the diorama showed the adaptation of John Martin's painting, the Royal Bazaar had reopened under a new name, the Queen's Bazaar.
 - 26 Quoted from Hyde, *Panoramania!*, p. 126.
 - 27 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, vol. 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983, p. 50. This disappearance of the use-value of commodities is, of course, what Marx famously called the fetishism of commodities in the first volume of *Das Kapital*. For Marx, commodity fetishism is both an objectively rooted illusion and an accurate registration of the fact that under capitalism labour had become divided.
 - 28 Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, vol. 1, p. 522.
 - 29 The most comprehensive history of the National Gallery to date is Jonathan Conlin's *The Nation's Mantelpiece: A History of the National Gallery*, London: Pallas Athene, 2006. It appeared after this chapter was written and so could not inform the argument as much as it might have otherwise. Conlin is, however, not interested in the changing forms of display and their meaning. His is the first thorough social history of the National Gallery, going well beyond narrow institutional accounts to be found in previous publications, for example: Gregory Martin, 'The Founding of the National Gallery in London', *Connoisseur*, vol. 185 (April 1974), pp. 280–87; vol. 186 (May–August 1974), pp. 26–31; vol. 187 (September–December 1974), pp. 49–53; and Felicity Owen, 'Sir George Beaumont and the National Gallery', in 'Noble and Patriotic': *The Beaumont Gift*, exh. cat., National Gallery, London, 1988, pp. 7–16. See also: Charles Holmes and C. H. Collins Baker, *The Making of the National Gallery*, London: National Gallery, 1924; Philip Hendy, *The National Gallery London*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1960. These publications tell the story of the National Gallery as largely driven by individuals, their decisions and practical concerns. Although Ivan Gaskell is undoubtedly right in asserting that much recent writing on museums 'ignores the fact that museums are constituted of people, as well as of buildings and collections' ('Book Review of Douglas Crimp's *On the Museum's Ruins*', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 77, March 1995, p. 673), the decisions on which these people base their activities shape and are shaped by larger social contexts that deserve attention. In this respect I am indebted to two more recent accounts that discuss the National Gallery in the context of nineteenth-century social and political concerns: Carol Duncan's 'From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London', in her *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 34–47, and Colin Trodd's 'Culture, Class, City: The National Gallery, London, and the Spaces of Education, 1822–57', in Marcia Pointon, ed., *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and North America*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, pp. 33–49.
 - 30 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on Arts and their Connexion with Manufactures*, Parliamentary Papers 9, London: House of Commons, 1836, p. 124. Wilkins thought that two tiers of pictures were more than enough.
 - 31 John Ruskin in *The Times* (7 January 1847), p. 5.
 - 32 Charles L. Eastlake, *The National Gallery: Observation on the Unfitness of the Present Building for its Purpose. In a Letter to the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.*, London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1845, p. 7. The letter was also published in the *Athenaeum Journal* (7 June 1845), p. 570, through which it certainly reached a wide and interested public.
 - 33 For a more comprehensive discussion of this, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, chapter 3.
 - 34 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. and ed. Charles L. Eastlake, London: John Murray, 1840.
 - 35 The second part of Goethe's book includes a vehement polemic against Newton's *Optics*, but Eastlake, sensitive to Newton's status in his own country, did not translate this. The first part, which Eastlake did translate, was divided into three sections and addressed the physiological, physical and chemical aspects of colour, followed by some more general treatments.
 - 36 Charles L. Eastlake, 'Introduction', in Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xli.
 - 37 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, pp. 20–8.
 - 38 Eastlake, 'Introduction', in Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xi.
 - 39 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. 373.
 - 40 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, pp. x, 363, 373, 375, 388.
 - 41 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. 358. Occasionally, as here, the information was supplied not by Eastlake but by a 'scientific friend'.
 - 42 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, pp. 374 and 390. Brewster, although complimentary about Eastlake's translation and notes, wrote a scathing review of Goethe's *Theory of Colours* in the *Edinburgh Review* (vol. 72, October 1840, pp. 99–131). Brewster himself had challenged Newton's theory, and by conducting experiments of the absorption of rays of the spectrum, he came to postulate that instead of Newton's seven colours the spectrum was formed of only three: red, yellow and blue (*A Treatise on Optics*, London: Longman, 1831, pp. 72–3). This was only a modification of Newton's theory, however, and retained an essential understanding of colours as being the effects of the refrangibility of light. What outraged him in Goethe's theory was the latter's suggestion that colour was the result of the interaction of light and dark – and as such a degree of darkness – and that this constituted a 'primordial phenomenon' of vision.
 - 43 Jan Evangelista Purkinje, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Sehens in subjektiver Hinsicht*, Prague:

- J. G. Calve, 1819; and *Neue Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Sehens in subjektiver Hinsicht*, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1825.
- 44 Purkinje, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis*, p. 162.
- 45 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* [1781–7], in *Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, vols 3 and 4, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974; Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 3 vols, London and Edinburgh: T. Cadell, 1792–1827.
- 46 Johannes Müller, *Handbuch der Physiologie des Menschen*, Koblenz: J. Hölscher, 1838.
- 47 I am quoting from the English translation: Johannes Müller, *Elements of Physiology*, trans. William Baly, London: Taylor and Walton, 1838–42, vol. 2, pp. 1061–3.
- 48 Müller, *Elements of Physiology*, vol. 2, pp. 1064–5.
- 49 Müller, *Elements of Physiology*, vol. 2, pp. 1068–9.
- 50 This is the argument in chapter One of my *Science and the Perception of Nature: British Landscape Art in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.
- 51 Charles Wheatstone, 'Contributions to the Physiology of Vision, no. 1', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Great Britain*, vol. 1 (October 1830), pp. 101–17.
- 52 Wheatstone, 'Contributions to the Physiology of Vision' (*Philosophical Transactions*, 1838), in Wheatstone, *The Scientific Papers*, London: Physical Society, 1879, pp. 225–59.
- 53 Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 215–16.
- 54 Alexander Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect* London: John W. Parker, 1855, p. 371. Bain's *The Senses and the Intellect*, together with his *The Emotions and the Will* of 1859, were to be the standard British texts in psychology for the next half-century (see Robert M. Young, *Mind, Brain and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 101).
- 55 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. 373.
- 56 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, p. 15.
- 57 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, p. 15.
- 58 Letter by David Wilkie to Sir W. W. Knighton in Rome, 3 February 1838, transcribed by Hamish Miles, National Gallery Archive, NG5/34/1838.
- 59 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, appendix to 'Report on the Protection of the Pictures in the National Gallery', p. 10. This appendix contains the answers from nine European galleries to a questionnaire sent by the Commissioners of this report, Charles Eastlake, William Russell and Michael Faraday, on issues as diverse as the architecture, climate, preservation of the pictures and public admission to the collection.
- 60 McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, p. 126.
- 61 Helmine von Chezy, *Unvergessenes*, vol. 1, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1858, p. 271. I owe this reference to John Gage.
- 62 David Ramsay Hay, *The Laws of Harmonious Colouring, Adapted to House Decorations*, Edinburgh: D. Lizars, 1828, p. 63. In his library Eastlake had a later edition of this book, which his wife donated to the National Gallery after his death (*Catalogue of the Eastlake Library in the National Gallery*, London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1872; National Gallery Archive).
- 63 John Gage, *Colour in Turner: Poetry and Truth*, London: Studio Vista, 1969, p. 162.
- 64 Georg von Dillis, *Verzeichniss der Gemälde in der königlichen Pinakothek zu München*, Munich: Pinakothek, 1836, p. viii; Rüdiger Klessmann, *The Berlin Gallery*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1971, p. 29. The architect of the Berlin museum, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, particularly cited the Palazzo Pitti in Florence as an inspiration for the colour on the walls in Berlin.
- 65 Hay, *The Laws of Harmonious Colouring*, pp. 53–4.
- 66 Monika Renneberg, 'Farbige Schatten – oder wie die subjektiven Farben in die Welt der Physiker kamen und was sie dort anrichteten', in Gabriele Dürbeck et al., eds, *Wahrnehmung der Natur: Natur der Wahrnehmung*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001, pp. 237–51.
- 67 John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1993, p. 172; also Kemp, *The Science of Art*, p. 295.
- 68 For Young and complementaries, see Kemp, *The Science of Art*, p. 295; for Brewster, see Gage, *Colour in Turner*, pp. 122–6.
- 69 Quoted in Gage, *Colour in Turner*, p. 149.
- 70 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. 317.
- 71 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, appendix D, p. 84.
- 72 Letter from Charles Eastlake to Thomas Uwins, 17 April 1854, National Gallery Archive, NG5/104/1854.
- 73 *Minute Book, Royal National Gallery: Minutes of Board Meetings 11/12/1847–18/12/1854*, vol. 2: Meeting of the Trustees, 7 July 1853, pp. 230–31, National Gallery Archive.
- 74 *Treasury Minute on the Reconstituting of the Establishment of the National Gallery*, London: House of Commons, 1855, National Gallery Archive. On Eastlake's negotiations, see also Elizabeth Eastlake, *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, vol. 2, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, London: John Murray, 1895, p. 33; also Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, pp. 139–40. Robertson's discussion of Charles Eastlake's role as keeper and director of the National Gallery concentrates on his acquisitions rather than his display strategies.
- 75 Geoffrey Tyack, 'A Gallery Worthy of the British People: James Pennethorne's Designs for the National Gallery, 1845–1867', *Architectural History*, vol. 33 (1990), pp. 126–7.
- 76 *Minute Book, National Gallery*, vol. 4: Meeting of the Trustees, 21 January 1861, p. 248.
- 77 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, p. 15.
- 78 *The Times* (11 May 1861), p. 11.
- 79 Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, pp. 365–6 and 378.
- 80 I have not been able to find any archival evidence to identify who prevented the implementation of the scheme or for what reasons.
- 81 *The Times* (11 May 1861), p. 11.
- 82 *Art-Journal* (1 May 1861), p. 151.
- 83 Letter from Charles Eastlake to Ralph Nicholson Wornum, 22 October 1860, National Gallery Archive, NG5/139/1860. In this letter Eastlake advises Wornum on the hanging of the pictures in the new and old rooms in a way that differs from the order later adopted.
- 84 *The Art-Journal* called the room the 'Tribune' (1 May 1861), p. 151. The name derived from a room in the Uffizi in Florence, which still exists today. In *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, p. 31, Eastlake expressed his distaste for the 'Tribune' in the Louvre's recently (1848) reopened Salon Carré.
- 85 Charles Saumarez Smith, 'Narratives of Display at the National Gallery, London', *Art History*, vol. 30 (September 2007), fn. 3.
- 86 Michael Compton, 'The Architecture of Daylight', in Waterfield, ed., *Palaces of Art*, pp. 37–47.
- 87 Gage, *Colour in Turner*, pp. 151–2.
- 88 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, appendix D, p. 81.
- 89 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, pp. 8–14. William Dyce published the report as a postscript in his *The National Gallery: Its Formation and Management*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1853, pp. 76–84.
- 90 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, p. 13. On the artist's studio as a model for the mode of lighting in the Berlin Museum, see Christoph Martin Vogtherr, 'Kunstgenuss versus Kunstwissenschaft: Berliner Museumskonzeptionen bis 1830', in Alexis Joachimides et al., eds, *Museumsinszenierungen: zur Geschichte der Institution des Kunstmuseums*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995, p. 42.
- 91 Compton, 'The Architecture of Daylight', p. 39.
- 92 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, p. 9.
- 93 Dyce, *The National Gallery*, pp. 80–81.
- 94 See the plan in Dillis, *Verzeichniss der Gemälde*.
- 95 Eastlake, *The National Gallery*, p. 11. A mixed mode of lighting would, of course, not have done justice to works deliberately designed for directly lit locations (such as some Renaissance altarpieces and some of Gainsborough's commissioned portraits).
- 96 Dyce, *The National Gallery*, p. 83.
- 97 Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, chapter 6.
- 98 *Illustrated London News* (22 May 1858), p. 470.
- 99 Thomas Carlyle, 'Jean Paul Friedrich Richter' [1827], in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 1, London: Chapman and Hall, 1905, p. 19.
- 100 John Stuart Mill, 'Of Individuality, As one of the Elements of Well-Being', in *On Liberty* [1859], ed. John Gray and G. W. Smith, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 72–89. Mill encouraged his friend Alexander Bain to research the somatic causes of individual differences, and he himself planned a study, ethnology, which, as described by Bain, would complement Bain's 'analysis and classification of characters . . . and has for its object to deter-

- mine the effects of *circumstances* in bringing about the varieties actually occurring' (Alexander Bain, *On the Study of Character*, London: Parker, Son and Bourn, 1861, p. 13). On the widespread value of the concept of personality in Victorian psychophysiology, see Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 23–45.
- 101 Mill, 'Of Individuality', pp. 73–4.
- 102 Renate Petras, *Die Bauten der Berliner Museumsinsel*, Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987, p. 34.
- 103 For a discussion of the different conceptions of individuality in Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, Wordsworth and Chateaubriand, see Gerald N. Izenberg, *Impossible Individuality: Romanticism, Revolution and the Origins of Modern Selfhood, 1787–1802*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- 104 Goethe's translator into English was Thomas Carlyle, who published *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in 1824 (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 3 vols, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1824) and later also translated the *Wanderjahre*.
- 105 Friedrich Schiller, 'Ninth Letter', in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* [1793–4], trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, pp. 55–7.
- 106 Quoted from Izenberg, *Impossible Individuality*, p. 114.
- 107 Martha Woodmansee has argued that German authors established a new conception of art at the turn of the nineteenth century. In placing the emphasis on individual inspiration, German writers created the concept of the original genius – their motivation, according to Woodmansee, being to counter the commercialisation of literature, which was affecting the sales of their writing. Woodmansee concludes her discussion by arguing that this notion was transplanted to England by Coleridge and, to a certain extent, Wordsworth, who were, she claims, motivated by a similar need to 'reform the reading habits of the middle-class audience' of their day (*The Author, Art and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 118).
- 108 Woodmansee, *The Author, Art and the Market*, pp. 140–41.
- 109 Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800–1860*, 2nd edn, London: Libris, 1994, pp. 13–14.
- 110 August Wilhelm Schlegel, *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. John Black, 2 vols, London: Craddock and Joy, 1815.
- 111 Although Caroline Schlegel was always mentioned in letters as a co-author of this text, it appeared without her name in the second volume of the journal *Athenaeum* in 1799 edited by August Wilhelm together with his brother Friedrich (Lothar Müller, 'Nachwort', in August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Die Gemälde: Gespräch*, ed. Lothar Müller, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1996, p. 169).
- 112 August Wilhelm Schlegel, 'Die Gemälde', *Athenaeum*, vol. 2 (1799), pp. 39–151.
- 113 The discussion only begins, however, in front of the originals in the ancient sculpture galleries of the collection of the Saxon court in the Stallhof in Dresden and then continues outside in the meadows of the River Elbe. In the first part, inside the gallery, the protagonists reflect in general on the possibilities of talking about art. Outside they discuss each other's literary approaches.
- 114 Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, p. 11.
- 115 This was published later in Charles L. Eastlake, *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts*, London: John Murray, 1848, pp. 351–96.
- 116 I have discussed this at greater length in my article 'Mounting Vision: Charles Eastlake and the National Gallery of London', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 82 (June 2000), pp. 331–47, on which this chapter is based.
- 117 Eastlake, *Contributions*, p. 358. The translation is Eastlake's. I am grateful to E. Dorst who kindly located Schiller's distich for me in Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke in zehn Bänden*, vol. 1, Berlin: Aufbau, 1980, p. 354.
- 118 August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Theorie und Geschichte der bildenden Künste*, Berlin: Schlesinger'sche Buch- und Musikhandlung, 1827, pp. 564–630. This view grew out of Johann Gottfried Herder's promotion of an understanding of cultural variation (see William Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, pp. 73–80).
- 119 Quoted in Alexis Joachimides, *Die Museum-sreiformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums, 1880–1940*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001, p. 28. The statement was made in 1830, the year of the museum's opening.
- 120 Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, p. 11. Rumohr was heavily involved in the organisation of the new Berlin gallery.
- 121 For a discussion of Waagen's contribution to art history, see Gabriele Bickendorf, *Der Beginn der Kunstgeschichtsschreibung unter dem Paradigma 'Geschichte': Gustav Waagens Frühschrift 'Über Hubert und Johann van Eyck'*, Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985.
- 122 Johann David Passavant, *Tour of a German Artist in England*, trans. Elizabeth Rigby, 2 vols, London: Saunders and Ottley, 1836. On Elizabeth Eastlake, née Rigby, see Adele M. Ernststrom, 'Equally Lenders and Borrowers in Turn': The Working and Married Lives of the Eastlakes', *Art History*, vol. 15 (December 1992), pp. 470–85.
- 123 Charles L. Eastlake, 'Review of J.D. Passavant, "Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi"', *Quarterly Review*, vol. 81 (June 1840), pp. 1–48; reprinted in Eastlake, *Contributions*, pp. 180–271.
- 124 Franz Theodor Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting, Part 1: Italian Schools*, trans. Margaret Hutton, ed. Charles L. Eastlake, London: John Murray, 1842.
- 125 Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, trans. Elizabeth Eastlake, 3 vols, London: John Murray, 1854, and supplement, *Galleries of Art in Great Britain*, London: John Murray, 1857.
- 126 *Minute Book, Royal National Gallery*. Meeting of the Trustees, 13 May 1844, p. 254.
- 127 On Peel's politics, see Boyd Hilton, 'Peel: A Reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, vol. 22 (September 1979), pp. 589–614.
- 128 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on the Management of the National Gallery*, Parliamentary Papers 35, London: House of Commons, 1853, p. xvi. The Select Committee Report of 1836 had already criticised the preponderance of sixteenth-century Renaissance works in the National Gallery's collection, particularly by the Carracci, an imbalance that reflected the aristocratic predilections of the eighteenth century. Rather they recommended 'those of the era of Raphael, or of the times just antecedent to it' (*Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1836, p. x). The crucial difference between the two reports in 1836 and 1853, however, is that the earlier committee still recommended the acquisition of work on the grounds that it would form a collection of models of quality rather than illustrate the history of art.
- 129 For a fundamental critique of this view, see Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.
- 130 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1836, p. 11. It has sometimes been argued that there was a tension in the early years in the museum in Berlin, between an aesthetic reception (advocated by Humboldt) and an art historical one (advocated by Waagen). See, for example, Vogtherr, 'Kunstgenuss versus Kunstwissenschaft', p. 48. I cannot perceive any such tension in light of both the Waagen and Humboldt citations.
- 131 Bénédicte Savoy, 'Zum Öffentlichkeitscharakter deutscher Muscen im 18. Jahrhundert', in Savoy, ed., *Tempel der Kunst: die Entstehung des öffentlichen Museum in Deutschland, 1701–1815*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2001, pp. 9–23.
- 132 Conlin, *The Nation's Mantelpiece*, p. 222. See also the contemporary commentary of the director of the Königliches Museum in Berlin on a visit to London: Gustav Friedrich Waagen, 'Thoughts on the New Building to be Erected for the National Gallery', *Art Journal*, vol. 5 (April–May 1853), p. 124.
- 133 In Benedict Anderson's estimation, 'nothing perhaps more precipitated this search [for the imagined community of nations], nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways' (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, London: Verso, 1991, p. 36).
- 134 Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 18–19. Thus its usage was initially political, referring first to a territory rather than to the supposed cultural and ethnic unit that the term was to denote later. According to Roger J. Smith, cultural nationalism arose in

- nineteenth-century Britain with the popularisation of Scott's writing, and it was theoretically elaborated by Coleridge's treatise of 1830, 'On the Constitution of the Church and State' (*The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688–1863*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 133–70).
- 135 Conlin, *The Nation's Mantelpiece*, p. 222.
- 136 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, p. 6.
- 137 This section is based on a more extensive discussion of the issues in my essay 'The National Gallery in London and its Public', in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds, *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650–1850*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999, pp. 228–50.
- 138 See William T. Whitely, *Artists and Their Friends in England, 1700–1799*, vol. 1, London: Medici Society, 1928, pp. 325–8. For a comparison of the Louvre and the National Gallery, see Carol Duncan's 'From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum', pp. 21–47.
- 139 Peter Fullerton, 'Patronage and Pedagogy: The British Institution in the Early Nineteenth-Century', *Art History*, vol. 5 (March 1982), pp. 59–72.
- 140 Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750–1830', *Past and Present*, vol. 113 (November 1986), p. 113.
- 141 *Minute Book, Royal National Gallery: Minutes of the Board Meetings 7/2/1828–2/12/1847*, vol. 1, National Gallery Archive. To my knowledge, the last entry that refers explicitly to the 'Directors of the Royal National Gallery' occurs in the minutes of a meeting on 7 April 1843, p. 271.
- 142 David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820–1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 116.
- 143 This quote comes from an anonymously published pamphlet, *The Plan of an Academy for the better Cultivation, Improvement and Encouragement of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and the Arts of Design in General*, London, 1755.
- 144 Joseph Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics: John Stuart Mill and the Philosophical Radicals*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, p. 17.
- 145 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on Arts*, 1836, p. iii. On the views of the radicals, see Duncan, 'From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum', pp. 34–47.
- 146 My discussion of the National Gallery differs here from Colin Trodd's 'Culture, Class, City'. Whereas he sees a more or less constant opposition between bourgeois and working-class interests, I see this as a real issue only after 1837.
- 147 Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976, p. 135.
- 148 Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783–1870*, 2nd edn, New York: Longman, 1996, p. 276.
- 149 Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, London: Methuen, 1986.
- 150 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1836, p. 141.
- 151 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, p. 6.
- 152 Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, p. 170. For a good discussion of this, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 69–162.
- 153 John Stuart Mill departed in this respect from Bentham. There is, Mill declared, 'a natural affinity between goodness and the cultivation of the Beautiful, when it is real cultivation, and not mere unguided instinct' ('Inaugural Address at St Andrews' [1867], in Francis A. Cavenagh, ed., *James and John Stuart Mill on Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931, pp. 194–5).
- 154 This statement was given by John Peter Wildsmith, attendant in the National Gallery, to the Select Committee of 1841 (*Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on the Promotion of Fine Arts*, Parliamentary Papers 10, London: House of Commons, 1841, p. 137; and for similar statements, see also pp. 130–34).
- 155 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee*, 1850, p. iv.
- 156 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on Public Institutions*, Parliamentary Papers 16, London: House of Commons, 1860, p. 28.
- 157 Conlin, *The Nation's Mantelpiece*, p. 66.

2 Interiority and Intimacy

- 1 Heinrich von Dehn-Rotfelser, 'Geschichte und Beschreibung des neuen Gemäldegallerie-Gebäudes zu Kassel', in *Verzeichnis der in der Königl. Gemälde-Gallerie zu Cassel befindlichen Bilder*, 4th edn, Kassel: Kay, circa 1882, pp. 111–xxv; see also Marianne Heinz, *Ein Haus für die Moderne: 25 Jahre Neue Galerie, 1976–2001*, exh. cat., Neue Galerie, Kassel, 2001, pp. 7–9.
- 2 *Report and Minutes of the Select Committee on the Accommodation of the National Gallery*, Parliamentary Papers 15, London: House of Commons, 1850, Appendix D, p. 81.
- 3 David Blackburn and Geoff Eley have argued that after the disappointments of 1848, bourgeois political aspirations found their realisation in municipal power (*The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany*, rev. edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). See also Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1987.
- 4 Dehn-Rotfelser, 'Geschichte und Beschreibung des neuen Gemäldegallerie-Gebäudes zu Kassel', pp. ix–xi. Dehn-Rotfelser, like Eastlake, however, looked to Berlin for guidance with regard to the lighting of the gallery. Dehn-Rotfelser, too, followed Eduard Magnus's instructions for the treatment of large sky-lit rooms and smaller side-lit cabinets.
- 5 For a long time German art and culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries received little attention from English-speaking art historians. This changed in the 1990s, and some very helpful books have appeared. See, for example, Françoise Forster-Hahn, ed., *Imagining Modern German Culture, 1889–1910*, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996; James J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890–1937*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000; and Beth Irwin Lewis, *Art for All?: The Collision of Modern Art and the Public in Late-Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- 6 The building history of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin is well researched and need not be recapitulated here. See Paul Ortwin Rave, *Die Geschichte der Nationalgalerie*, Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1968; Françoise Forster-Hahn, 'Shrine of Art or Signature of a New Nation?', in Gwendolyn Wright, ed., *The Formation of National Collections, of Art and Archaeology*, Studies in the History of Art 47, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996, pp. 78–99; Hartmut Dorgerloh, *Die Nationalgalerie in Berlin: zur Geschichte des Gebäudes auf der Museumsinsel, 1841–1970*, Berlin: Mann, 1999; Bernhard Maaz, *Die Alte Nationalgalerie: Bau und Umbau*, Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2001, pp. 47–223.
- 7 See Forster-Hahn, 'Shrine of Art or Signature of a New Nation?', pp. 78–99; also Françoise Forster-Hahn, 'Museum moderner Kunst oder Symbol einer neuen Nation? zur Gründungsgeschichte der Berliner Nationalgalerie', in Claudia Rückert and Sven Kuhrau, eds, *Der Deutschen Kunst: Nationalgalerie und nationale Identität, 1876–1998*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1998, pp. 30–43.
- 8 A single, shared national consciousness remained elusive, however, and different claims competed with each other (see Susan A. Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).
- 9 This entrance, however, was hardly used. Soon after the museum's opening the entrance below the staircase, where carriages were meant to arrive, was used as the main entrance (see Maaz, *Die Alte Nationalgalerie*, p. 91).
- 10 The interior staircase bore a frieze that celebrated the ostensible interdependence of German history and culture, starting with the victory over the Roman legions in the Teutoburg Forest and ending with Germania holding the restored emperor's crown aloft to symbolise the achievement of German unity in 1871. Here too, however, as Bernhard Maaz has shown, the focus is on the Protestant north, and after 1800, artists, poets and musicians from Berlin predominate. The frieze is also interesting for what it does *not* show: there is no Hölderlin, Kleist, Büchner, Schubert or Beethoven (Maaz, *Die Alte Nationalgalerie*, p. 112).
- 11 On the political expediency of German nationalism after 1871, see John Breuilly, 'The National Idea in Modern German History', in

- Mary Fulbrook, ed., *German History since 1800*, London: Arnold, 1997, pp. 556–84. Specifically, on the changed meaning of the word 'national' in Germany after unification, see Heinrich August Winkler, *Deutsche Geschichte: der lange Weg nach Westen*, Munich: Beck, 2000–02, vol. 1, pp. 213–65.
- 12 According to Peter Paret, 'it was unfortunate for modernism in Germany that William II, unlike most heads of state at the time, took art seriously' (Peter Paret, 'The Tschudi Affair', in Paret, *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 94).
 - 13 Winkler, *Deutsche Geschichte*, pp. 264–5.
 - 14 Birgit Kulhoff, *Bürgerliche Selbstbehauptung im Spiegel der Kunst*, Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1990, pp. 73–194.
 - 15 These views are expressed in a memorandum of 1883 for which, according to Alexis Joachimides, Bode was responsible. It was written under the auspices of the crown prince, Friedrich III, and his wife Victoria. Friedrich, in the tradition of estranged crown princes, was given the role of protector of the museums in 1871 in an attempt to sideline him from politics (Alexis Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums, 1880–1940*, Dresden: Verlag des Kunst, 2001, p. 60).
 - 16 For Bode's influence on the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, for example, see Malcolm Baker, 'Bode and Museum Display: The Arrangement of the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum and the South Kensington Response', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, vol. 38 (1996), pp. 143–53.
 - 17 The connection between Bode's installations and the interiors of contemporary collectors has been elaborated by Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, pp. 65–80.
 - 18 Bode described his aims in the journal *Museumskunde*: Wilhelm von Bode, 'Das Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin', *Museumskunde*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1905), pp. 1–16.
 - 19 Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, pp. 81–97.
 - 20 Wilhelm von Bode, 'Aus der Abteilung italienischer Bronzen in den Berliner Museen', *Pan*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1896), p. 253.
 - 21 See Barbara Paul, *Hugo von Tschudi und die moderne französische Kunst im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, Mainz: von Zabern, 1993, pp. 84–7.
 - 22 Hugo von Tschudi, 'Vorwort zum Katalog der aus der Sammlung Marzell von Nemes-Budapest in der Kgl. Alten Pinakothek zu München 1911 ausgestellten Gemälde', in Tschudi, *Gesammelte Schriften zur neueren Kunst*, Munich: Bruckmann, 1912, p. 226.
 - 23 For a representative review of contemporary responses, see Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 151.
 - 24 Barbara Paul, 'Drei Sammlungen französischer impressionistischer Kunst im kaiserlichen Berlin', *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 42, no. 3 (1988), pp. 11–30.
 - 25 See, for example, interior illustrations in *Dekorative Kunst*, vols 1–3 (1897–9).
 - 26 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* [1904], ed. Hans Belting, 2 vols, Munich: Piper, 1987.
 - 27 Joseph W. Nahlowsky, *Das Gefühlsleben in seinen wesentlichen Erscheinungen und Bezügen*, Leipzig: Veit, 1884, p. 147; see also Carl Hermann, *Aesthetische Farbenlehre*, Leipzig: Voss, 1876, p. 45.
 - 28 Arnold Ewald, *Die Farbenbewegung: Kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1876; and also Anton Marty, *Die Frage nach der geschichtlichen Entwicklung des Farbensinnes*, Vienna: Gerold, 1879.
 - 29 Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Vorschule der Aesthetik* [1876], Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1925, vol. 1, p. 109.
 - 30 Karl Scheffler, 'Notizen über die Farbe', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 4, no. 5 (1901), p. 190. I have discussed this essay in more depth in: 'Patterns of Attention: From Shop Windows to Gallery Rooms in Early Twentieth-Century Berlin', *Art History*, vol. 28 (September 2005), pp. 480–81.
 - 31 For a more comprehensive discussion of Lipps's aesthetic, see my 'Patterns of Attention', pp. 470–71.
 - 32 For a useful introduction, see Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, 'Introduction', in Mallgrave and Ikonomou, eds, *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893*, Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1994, pp. 1–85.
 - 33 Martha Ward, 'Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 73 (December 1991), pp. 599–622.
 - 34 See, for example, the description of one exhibition in a review in *Kunst für Alle* (vol. 15, 1901, p. 441), which mentions light green striped wallpaper in one room, pink in another. In 1899 the Secession allowed the members of the Vereinigten Werkstätten für Kunst und Handwerk in Munich to exhibit fully furnished rooms on its premises. Van de Velde displayed a study with highly patterned wallpaper. See Maria M. Makela, *The Munich Secession: Art and Artists in Turn-of-the-Century Munich*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 124–5.
 - 35 Hugo von Tschudi, 'Kunst und Publikum' in Tschudi, *Gesammelte Schriften zur neueren Kunst*, Munich: Bruckmann, 1912, p. 64.
 - 36 Tschudi, 'Kunst und Publikum', p. 73.
 - 37 Peter Paret, *The Berlin Secession*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980; Nicolaas Teeuwisse, *Vom Salon zur Secession: Berliner Kunstleben zwischen Tradition und Aufbruch zur Moderne, 1871–1900*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1986.
 - 38 This exchange was reported by Alfred Lichtwark and is quoted in Angelica Wesenberg and Ruth Langenberg, eds, *Im Streit um die Moderne: Max Liebermann, der Kaiser, die Nationalgalerie*, exh. cat., Max Liebermann Haus, Berlin, 2001, p. 25.
 - 39 Uta Lehnert, *Der Kaiser und die Siegesallee*, Berlin: Reimer, 1998, pp. 248–50.
 - 40 Although by then Wilhelm II had also largely retreated from the cultural battlefield; see Paret, 'The Tschudi Affair', pp. 116–18. In 1909, however, Tschudi was appointed director of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.
 - 41 Ludwig Justi, *Werden – Wirken – Wissen: Lebenserinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten*, ed. Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Kurt Winkler, vol. 1, Berlin: Nicolai, 2001, p. 165.
 - 42 Hamburger Kunsthalle, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthalle zu Hamburg für 1889*, 1890, p. 39.
 - 43 Hamburger Kunsthalle, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthalle zu Hamburg für 1898*, 1900, p. 18.
 - 44 Alfred Lichtwark, 'Palastfenster und Fluegelthuer', *Pan*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1896), p. 58.
 - 45 Hermann Muthesius, *Das Englische Haus*, 3 vols, Berlin: Wasmuth, 1904–11. All three, of course, mistook Voysey's, Morris's, Webb's and others' houses as being typical of English ways of living.
 - 46 Eberhard von Bodenhausen, 'Englische Kunst im Haus', *Pan*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1896), p. 329.
 - 47 Alfred Lichtwark, 'Museumsbauten', in Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen, *Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätte*, Schriften der Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen 25, Berlin: Hetzmann, 1904, p. 120.
 - 48 Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 109.
 - 49 Lichtwark, 'Museumsbauten', p. 119.
 - 50 This, in fact, had become the norm for purpose-built artists' studios (see Heinrich Wagner, 'Museen', in Josef Durm et al., eds, *Handbuch der Architektur*, vol. 4, no. 4, Darmstadt: Bergsträsser, 1893, p. 257).
 - 51 Lichtwark, 'Museumsbauten', p. 119.
 - 52 For the widespread belief among the German Romantics in the museum as a sacred space with a public function, see Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World*, pp. 43–9.
 - 53 Lange does not appear in the proceedings, but an article makes it clear that he was in attendance (Konrad Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe in Bildgalerien', *Kunst für Alle*, vol. 19, 1904, p. 493).
 - 54 Pankok, although he had recently moved to Stuttgart, belonged to the Vereinigten Werkstätten in Munich, an organisation that also included Richard Riemerschmid and Bruno Paul and tended to be known for dark and heavy but nonetheless functional designs (Sonja Günther, *Interieurs um 1900: Bernhard Pankok, Bruno Paul und Richard Riemerschmid als Mitarbeiter der Vereinigten Werkstätten für Kunst im Handwerk*, Munich: Fink, 1971).
 - 55 Gustav E. Pazauner, 'Die Stuttgarter Königliche Gemäldegalerie', *Museumskunde*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1907), pp. 62–7.
 - 56 An exception was Karl Ernst Osthaus's commissioning of Henry van de Velde to design his private museum. Colour played an important role here too, as, for example, when the violet-yellow-green chromatic scheme of the Tiffany glass in the skylight was continued in the lining of the display cases for East Asian craft objects. See Karl Ernst Osthaus in Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen, *Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätte*, p. 140. This museum was, however, not an art gallery. Most art gallery directors limited themselves to experimenting with colour on the walls.
 - 57 Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe in Bildgalerien', p. 493.
 - 58 Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe in Bildgalerien', p. 497.

- 59 Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe in Bildgalerien', p. 498.
- 60 Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe in Bildgalerien', p. 500.
- 61 Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe in Bildgalerien', p. 547.
- 62 It was widely remarked at the time that this kind of colour symbolism was by no means universal. For example, it was noted that in India and Japan white was used as a colour of bereavement and red for wedding dresses (Louise von Kobell, *Farben und Feste*, Munich: Vereinigte Kunstanstalten, 1900, p. 154).
- 63 Justi was particularly proud of this innovation. The curtains were initially required wherever a door was in line with a window on the other side – in order to prevent the spectator from being blinded with light as he or she approached the room. Justi also left the curtains slightly ajar, to signal to the visitors that this was not a closed-off space, but one to be entered (Ludwig Justi, 'Die Neuordnung der Gemäldegalerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut', *Museumskunde*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1905, p. 209).
- 64 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 166. Justi wrote these memoirs after his dismissal by the Nazis in the 1930s; he prepared typescripts for publication after 1945, but they were not published in his lifetime.
- 65 Justi, 'Die Neuordnung der Gemäldegalerie', p. 208. There is little evidence that this was indeed a Vienna Secession principle. See the comprehensive photo documentation in Sabine Forsthuber, *Moderne Raumkunst: Wiener Ausstellungsbauten von 1898 bis 1914*, Vienna: Pincus, 1991.
- 66 Justi, 'Die Neuordnung der Gemäldegalerie', p. 206. Occasionally, lack of space or gaps in the collection required the display of artists from different countries in a single room. So, Velázquez, Tiepolo, Canaletto, Nattier, Tischbein and other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists were shown in one room that had grey-lilac walls.
- 67 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 168.
- 68 Justi had encountered the issue of frames during his period as an assistant to Bode in the picture gallery in Berlin. Bode had started to reframe parts of the collection by acquiring contemporary frames that were then available relatively cheaply (see Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 131). Bode advocated their use by publishing research on the issue of Renaissance frames in several articles starting with 'Bilderrahmen in alter und neuer Zeit', *Pan*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1898), pp. 243–56.
- 69 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 170.
- 70 Kurt Winkler, 'Ludwig Justis Konzept des Gegenwartsmuseums zwischen Avantgarde und nationaler Repräsentation', in Rückert and Kuhrau, eds, 'Der Deutschen Kunst', p. 66.
- 71 According to Justi, Wilhelm Trübner himself participated in the design. See Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 304.
- 72 In Liebermann's painting of this space of 1902, today in the Kunstmuseum St Gallen and illustrated here, it is the carpet rather than the pictures on the wall that is the chromatic cynosure.
- 73 See, for example, the review by Hans Marshall, 'Aus Berliner Kunstsalon', *Deutsche Kunst*, vol. 3 (1898–9), pp. 43–4.
- 74 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 168.
- 75 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, pp. 247–52.
- 76 This has been impressively and meticulously documented by Maaz, *Die Alte Nationalgalerie*, pp. 121–47.
- 77 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 306.
- 78 See, for example, Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 456. When Justi created a subsidiary gallery of the Nationalgalerie devoted to contemporary art in the 1920s (to be discussed in the next chapter), he avidly promoted German Expressionism at the expense of the more critical and international Dada and Constructivism movements. See Winkler, 'Ludwig Justis Konzept des Gegenwartsmuseums zwischen Avantgarde und nationaler Repräsentation', pp. 73–81.
- 79 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 306. Several historians have recently argued that German national identity is better understood as a conglomerate of strong regional identifications rather than one over-arching shared and agreed set of features. See the pioneering work of Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990; and Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany and National Memory, 1871–1911*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- 80 Justi's papers from this period as director of the Nationalgalerie are kept in the archive of the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin and contain a comprehensive collection of reviews (see 'Neuordnung Nationalgalerie', Nachlass Justi, Archiv der BBAW, lot 475).
- 81 Adolf Behne, *Die Gegenwart*, 28 March 1914, p. 202.
- 82 Joachimides has stated that Scheffler was suggesting white walls as the best background (Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 198). This is unlikely, I think, because Scheffler also used Cassirer's gallery as a model (grey walls) and thought the walls for Leibl, which were off-white, far too light in colour. Justi wrote in his memoirs, possibly in response to Scheffler's critique, that Böcklin's studio had dark violet walls (Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 170).
- 83 Karl Scheffler, 'Der Aufbau der Nationalgalerie', *Vossische Zeitung*, 14 March 1914, n. p.
- 84 Timothy Lenoir, *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of Scientific Disciplines*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 131–78.
- 85 By then, Helmholtz was already embroiled in a vicious dispute with Ewald Hering over the fundamental processes of retinal colour mixing and spatial perception. See R. Steven Turner, *In the Eye's Mind: Vision and the Helmholtz–Hering Controversy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- 86 Hermann von Helmholtz, 'Die neueren Fortschritte in der Theorie des Sehens', in *Vorträge und Reden*, 4th edn, vol. 1, Brunswick: Vieweg, 1896, p. 286.
- 87 Hermann von Helmholtz, 'Ueber Goethe's naturwissenschaftliche Arbeiten', in *Vorträge und Reden*, vol. 1, pp. 41–2.
- 88 Hermann von Helmholtz, 'Die Thatsachen in der Wahrnehmung', in *Vorträge und Reden*, vol. 2, p. 230.
- 89 Helmholtz, 'Die Thatsachen in der Wahrnehmung', pp. 232–3.
- 90 John Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, pp. 212–13, 220–21.
- 91 Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, p. 221.
- 92 Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, p. 212.
- 93 For a discussion of Henry's impact on the Neo-Impressionists, see Martha Ward, *Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 124–46.
- 94 J. A. Argüelles, *Charles Henry and the Formation of a Psycho-Physical Aesthetic*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972: 'Of course the white center is also a symbolic white, with reference to Henry's idea of 'physiological white' – the purity of the experience at the center of being – which is the synthetic effect of total simultaneous perception' (p. 135). Argüelles makes a case for the importance of Henry's mysticism in the construction of his colour theory.
- 95 Ward, *Pissarro*, p. 126.
- 96 Charles Féré, *Sensation et mouvement*, Paris: Alcan, 1887, pp. 41–6.
- 97 Deborah Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 212–14.
- 98 Ward, 'Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions', p. 610. See also Eva Mendgen, 'Art or Decoration?', in Mendgen, ed., *In Perfect Harmony: Picture and Frame, 1850–1920*, Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum, 1995, pp. 97–126; Matthias Waschek, 'Camille Pissarro: From Impressionist Frame to Decorative Object', in Mendgen, ed., *In Perfect Harmony*, pp. 139–48. Similarly, the American artist James McNeill Whistler began to experiment with finely tuned colouristic exhibition rooms from 1874 (Deanna Marohn Bendix, *Diabolical Designs: Paintings, Interiors and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995, pp. 205–68).
- 99 Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 153–63.
- 100 Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against the Grain* [1884], New York: Dover, 1969, p. 14.
- 101 For Helmholtz's influentially optimistic view of fatigue, see Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (pp. 56–61), which also discusses German concerns with the debilitating effects.
- 102 Wilhelm Wundt, *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* [1874], 4th edn, vol. 1, Leipzig: Engelmann, 1893, p. 576.
- 103 Justi admitted that he found Wundt's work difficult to read (Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 505).
- 104 Hans Dedekam, 'Reisestudien', *Museumskunde*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1906), pp. 92–109. In 1904 he had presented the same material to the British Museum Association and it was published that same year in the Association's journal (Hans Dedekam, 'On Colours in Museums', *Museums Journal*, vol. 4, December 1904, pp. 173–200).

- 105 Dedekam, 'Reisestudien', p. 92.
- 106 Dedekam, 'On Colours', p. 174. Dedekam also drew on Alfred Lehmann's 'Farvernes elementære æsthetic' (Ph.D thesis, Polytechnical Institute, Copenhagen, 1884), from which he seems to have gleaned an evolutionary justification for this. Lehmann studied at Wundt's newly established Leipzig Institute from 1885 to 1886.
- 107 Dedekam, 'On Colours', p. 176.
- 108 Dedekam, 'On Colours', pp. 184-5.
- 109 Dedekam, 'On Colours', p. 183.
- 110 Jonas Cohn, 'Experimentelle Untersuchungen über die Gefühlsbetonung der Farben, Helligkeiten und ihrer Combinationen', *Philosophische Studien*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1894), pp. 561-603.
- 111 David Major at Cornell concluded from his experiments that less saturated colours in binary combinations were considered more pleasing (David R. Major, 'On the Affective Tone of Simple Sense-Impressions', *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1895, pp. 57-77). Emma Baker in Toronto conducted experiments with saturated pigment and spectrally pure colours and concluded in opposition to Cohn 'that the most pleasant combinations are not between complementary colours, but between colours of less difference in quality' (Emma S. Baker, 'Experiments on the Aesthetic of Light and Colour', *University of Toronto Studies: Psychological Series*, vol. 1, 1900, p. 248).
- 112 See Baker, 'Experiments on the Aesthetic of Light and Colour', p. 248; and Susie A. Chown, 'Experiments on the Aesthetic of Light and Colour', *University of Toronto Studies: Psychological Series*, vol. 2 (1907), pp. 85-102. While Baker, like Cohn, worked with fully saturated colours, Chown conducted her experiments with broken colours, because 'it is scarcely ever binary combinations of highly saturated colours which we use for architecture, decoration or dress' (p. 89). She explicitly addressed the cultural and associational aspects that determine colour preferences. Cohn responded to Major's earlier contradiction of his results with a new set of experiments in which he adopted Major's colour material and order of presentation as well as including women as subjects (Jonas Cohn, 'Gefühlston und Sättigung der Farben', *Philosophische Studien*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1900, pp. 279-86). Although confirming his earlier conclusions, he admitted that associations might play a far greater role than he had allowed. Not insignificantly, perhaps, Cohn went on to become a vehement critic of experimental psychology and a spokesman for a neo-idealist aesthetic (Christian G. Allesch, *Geschichte der psychologischen Ästhetik*, Göttingen: Hogrefe, 1987, pp. 396-9).
- 113 Lange, 'Über die Wandfarbe', p. 497.
- 114 Konrad Lange, *Das Wesen der Kunst* [1901], 2nd edn, Berlin: Grote, 1907, pp. 12-24. This was Lange's own contribution to aesthetics. In many ways it was closely related to empathy theories, although Lange considered a conscious self-deception between two states of mind to be the most significant element in aesthetic contemplation.
- 115 Lange, *Das Wesen der Kunst*, p. 541.
- 116 For a summary of these positions, see Theodor Ziehen, 'Über den gegenwärtigen Stand der experimentellen Ästhetik', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik*, vol. 9 (1914), pp. 16-46.
- 117 On this, see Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 213.
- 118 Kulhoff, *Bürgerliche Selbstbehauptung*, pp. 147-76.
- 119 Karl Scheffler, 'Berliner Brief', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 7, no. 5 (1904), p. 249.
- 120 Quoted from Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 126.
- 121 Robert Jensen has argued that all European Secession movements separated from the main artists' exhibition in order to move away from public appeal towards private exclusivity (*Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 167-200).
- 122 Hugo von Tschudi, 'Kunst und Publikum', p. 64.
- 123 Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 163.
- 124 Karl Scheffler, *Die Architektur der Grossstadt* [1913], Berlin: Mann, 1998, pp. 83-5.
- 125 Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen, *Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätte*, pp. 141-2.
- 126 Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen, *Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätte*, p. 2.
- 127 Justi, however, was not in attendance in Mannheim. He held a professorship at the University of Halle in 1903, but it is safe to say that he held similar views. See, for example, Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, pp. 153-4, 175.
- 128 Julius Meier-Graefe, 'Modernes Milieu', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 4, no. 7 (1901), p. 254.
- 129 Meier-Graefe, 'Modernes Milieu', p. 264.
- 130 The exhibition has been comprehensively and convincingly discussed by Sabine Beneke, *Im Blick der Moderne: die Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst (1775-1875) in der Berliner Nationalgalerie, 1906*, Berlin: Bostelmann und Siebenhaar, 1999.
- 131 This section is largely taken from my 'Patterns of Attention', pp. 481-5.
- 132 Shortly after Tschudi's appointment to the directorship of the Nationalgalerie, Lichtwark had approached him with the idea of staging a centenary exhibition of German art. Lichtwark later complained to Justi that this was not a project that Tschudi was keen to realise, and so he dragged his feet. Thus the exhibition failed to materialise by 1900. In 1904 negotiations were largely under way again when Meier-Graefe returned from France and discussed with Tschudi a similar idea. In order to avoid competing projects, he was invited to collaborate - although he had clashed with Lichtwark in 1895 on the issue of whether the luxury art magazine *Pan*, which he edited and on whose board Lichtwark sat, should be national or international in orientation. In the wake of this, Meier-Graefe was forced to resign from the editorship of *Pan*, and something similar happened again in 1906 when he was reduced to a subordinate position on the exhibition committee as a result of pressures from the Prussian Cultural Ministry. Meier-Graefe was suspect because of his Francophile views and ostensibly because of his commercial connections (Beneke, *Im Blick der Moderne*, pp. 85, 90-94).
- 133 For descriptions of these, see Gisela Moeller, *Peter Behrens in Düsseldorf*, Weinheim: VCH Verlagsgesellschaft, 1991, pp. 205-8, 463-75.
- 134 Wilhelm Niemeyer, 'Peter Behrens und die Raumästhetik seiner Kunst', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1906), pp. 145-6.
- 135 Lichtwark on Behrens is cited in Moeller, *Peter Behrens*, p. 205. For Meier Graefe, see Julius Meier-Graefe, 'Peter Behrens in Düsseldorf', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 8, no. 10 (1905), pp. 381-90.
- 136 Françoise Forster-Hahn has recently discovered several hitherto unknown postcards showing the interior of the *Centenary Exhibition*. The images confirm that a uniform decoration and a relatively crowded hang in two tiers prevailed throughout the museum.
- 137 On Hoffmann's and Moser's exhibition design of the Vienna Secession, see Forsthuber, *Moderne Raumkunst*, pp. 99-105.
- 138 Beneke, *Im Blick der Moderne*, p. 117.
- 139 For example, by Paul Schulze-Naumburg (of later Nazi notoriety), 'Biedermeisterstil?', *Kunstwart*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1905), pp. 130-37.
- 140 Alfred Lichtwark, 'Deutsche Kunst', *Kunst für Alle*, vol. 15 (1901), p. 441.
- 141 David Blackburn, *History of Germany, 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, p. 136. By 1900 the German economy was comparable in magnitude to that of Great Britain.
- 142 Alfred Lichtwark, 'Rundschau', *Pan*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1895), p. 98.
- 143 The German Werkbund, for example, was an initiative by like-minded industrialists committed to improving the quality of products. Soon, however, similar divisions emerged within the Werkbund. On the one hand were people like Hermann Muthesius, who believed that aesthetic reform could be achieved only through the agency of a small elite, and on the other were those like Karl Ernst Osthaus, who hoped to educate the consumer. On the German Werkbund, see Frederick J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996; and Joan Campbell, *The German Werkbund: The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- 144 Karl Scheffler, 'Der Fabrikant', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 7, no. 10 (1904), pp. 309-407.
- 145 Karl Scheffler, 'Korrespondenzen Berlin', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1898), p. 187.
- 146 See, for example, Theodor König (*Reklame-Psychologie* [1923], 3rd edn, Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg 1926, pp. 21-2), who cites German and American studies.
- 147 Alfred Lichtwark, *Die Erziehung des Farbenseinnes* [1901], 3rd edn, Berlin: Cassirer 1905, p. 5.

3 Exteriority and Exhibition Spaces in Weimar Germany

- 1 Georg Simmel, 'Das Problem des Stiles', *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 11, no. 7 (1908), pp. 307–16.
- 2 Simmel, 'Das Problem des Stiles', p. 314.
- 3 Ludwig Justi, *Werden – Wirken – Wissen: Lebenserinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten*, ed. Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Kurt Winkler, 2 vols, Berlin: Nicolai, 2001, vol. 1, p. 116.
- 4 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces' [1926], in Thomas Y. Levin, trans. and ed., *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 326.
- 5 An extremely interesting discussion of the intellectual relationship between Simmel, Kracauer and Walter Benjamin can be found in David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1986.
- 6 Janet Ward discusses the features of architecture, advertising, shop displays and movies in these terms in her *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. For Ward, the Weimar years are a bridge from modernity to postmodernity. In contrast to what she deems to be today's dystopian, electronically simulational environment, Ward emphasises the physical encounters of dazzling surfaces and their dynamic, meaningful role in mass cultural formations in 1920s Berlin.
- 7 Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- 8 Kracauer sang the swansong, for example, of the Lindenpassage, on the Friedrichstrasse in Berlin (Siegfried Kracauer, 'Abschied von der Lindenpassage', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 21 December 1930; reprinted in Kracauer, *Strassen in Berlin und anderswo*, Berlin: Arsenal 1987, pp. 24–9).
- 9 Martina Düttmann, ed., *Interior Design, 1929: From Opp Shop to Cockatoo Bar*, Basel: Birkhäuser, 1989, p. 174. This is a reprint of *Moderne Ladenbauten und Moderne Cafés*, Berlin: Pollak, 1929.
- 10 Paul Fechter, *Der Expressionismus*, Munich: Piper, 1914.
- 11 A representative selection of private and public displays by the Brücke group has been gathered together by Wolfgang Henze, 'Die Zeichen der Zeit und sich selbst erkennen: die frühen Privatsammlungen und der Kunstbetrieb des Expressionismus, 1905–1933', in Eva Caspers, Wolfgang Henze and Hans-Jürgen Luowski, eds, *Nolde, Schmidt-Rottluff und ihre Freunde: die Sammlung Martha und Paul Rauert Hamburg, 1905–1958*, exh. cat., Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg, 1999, pp. 97–128.
- 12 John Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, pp. 192–3.
- 13 Wassily Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, vol. 1, London: Faber 1982, p. 182.
- 14 Bruno Taut, 'Der Regenbogen: Aufruf zum farbigen Bauen', in Taut, ed., *Frühlicht, 1920–1922: eine Folge für die Verwirklichung des neuen Baugedankens*, reprinted, Berlin: Ullstein, 1963, p. 98. On Taut, see Ian Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- 15 Bruno Taut, *Die Neue Wohnung: die Frau als Schöpferin*, 2nd edn, Leipzig: Kinkhardt & Biermann, 1924, p. 75.
- 16 Ewald Paul, 'Die Wirkung der Farbe auf die Nerven', in Taut, ed., *Frühlicht, 1920–1922*, pp. 118–20.
- 17 Shell shock as a historical category – referring to a physiologically and psychologically diffuse phenomenon – has recently received renewed attention. For the German context, I found particularly useful Doris Kaufmann, 'Science as Cultural Practice: Psychiatry in the First World War and Weimar Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1999), pp. 125–44; see also Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890–1930*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- 18 Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, p. 265.
- 19 Johannes Itten, *Design and Form: The Basic Course at the Bauhaus* [1963], trans. Fred Bradley, rev. edn, London: Thames and Hudson, 1975, p. 33.
- 20 An exception was Gustav J. von Allesch, *Die ästhetische Erscheinungsweise der Farben*, Berlin: J. Springer, 1925.
- 21 Johannes Itten, *Kunst der Farbe: Subjektives Erleben und objektives Erkennen als Wege zur Kunst* [1970], Leipzig: Seemann, 2001, pp. 26–7.
- 22 Siegfried Jaeger, 'Zur Herausbildung von Praxisfeldern der Psychologie bis 1933', in Mitchell G. Ash and Ulfried Geuter, eds, *Geschichte der deutschen Psychologie im 20. Jahrhundert: ein Überblick*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985, pp. 83–112; Horst Gundlach, ed., *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Psychologie und der Psychotechnik*, Munich: Profil, 1996.
- 23 Jaeger, 'Zur Herausbildung von Praxisfeldern der Psychologie bis 1933', pp. 103–6.
- 24 Dirk Reinhardt, *Von der Reklame zum Marketing: Geschichte der Wirtschaftswerbung in Deutschland*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993, pp. 87–99.
- 25 Rudolf Seyffert, *Die Reklame des Kaufmanns* [1920], 3rd edn, Leipzig: G. A. Gloeckner, 1925, pp. 30–31. Seyffert's colour discussion was repeated in its essential by the seminal text on advertising psychology, Theodor König's *Reklame-Psychologie* [1923], (3rd edn, Munich and Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1926, pp. 179–81), and also by Edmund Lysinski's 'Die psychologischen Grundlagen der Reklame' (in Walter Mahlberg et al., eds, *Grundriss der Betriebswirtschaftslehre*, vol. 13: *Nachrichtendienst, Schriftverkehr und Reklame*, Leipzig: G. A. Gloeckner, 1928, pp. 366–7), to which Lysinski added his own research on the effects of different light (daylight, twilight, electrical light) and the arrangement of shop windows from the years 1919 and 1920.
- 26 *Museum der Gegenwart: Zeitschrift der Deutschen Museen für neuere Kunst*, vols 1–4, 1930–33. On German museums and Expressionism and this journal in particular, see Kurt Winkler, *Museum und Avantgarde: Ludwig Justi Zeitschrift 'Museum der Gegenwart' und die Musealisierung des Expressionismus*, Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 2002.
- 27 An interesting side effect of the increased popularity of Expressionist artists in the 1920s is that at least two former members of the (now defunct) Brücke were asked to devise colour schemes for museums. In 1926 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff produced a scheme for the modern art section of the König-Albert-Museum in Chemnitz, and a year later Erich Heckel was asked to provide a new interior for the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Magdeburg (see *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1930, p. 48; *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1932, p. 128). Unfortunately, it seems that only records of Schmidt-Rottluff's colour scheme have survived. They show that the colours chosen for the walls were every bit as rich as those selected by his friends and followers among museum directors (see, among others, Andrea Wandschneider, ed., *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Werke aus den Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz*, Frankfurt am Main: Altana 2002, p. 11; Nathalie Küchen, 'Expressionistische Ausstellungsräume: Karl Schmidt-Rottluffs Gestaltung der "Galerie der Moderne" in der Städtischen Kunstsammlung Chemnitz', unpublished MA dissertation, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2009).
- 28 For a thorough discussion of the coloured interiors in museums during the Weimar Republic, see Monika Flacke-Knoch, *Museumskonzeptionen in der Weimarer Republik: die Tätigkeit Alexander Dorners im Provinzialmuseum Hannover*, Marburg: Jonas, 1985, pp. 19–35.
- 29 Max Sauerlandt, *Aufbau und Aufgabe des Hamburgischen Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe*, Hamburg: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1927, p. 17.
- 30 Henze, 'Die Zeichen der Zeit', p. 125.
- 31 Max Sauerlandt, 'Holzbildwerke von Kirchner, Heckel und Schmidt-Rottluff im Hamburgischen Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1930), p. 110.
- 32 Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 156–87.
- 33 Shulamith Behr, 'Anatomy of the Woman as Collector and Dealer in the Weimar Period: Rosa Schapire and Johanna Ey', in Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West, eds, *Visions of the 'Neue Frau': Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995, pp. 96–109.
- 34 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 168.
- 35 See the published letter by Max Sauerlandt to Ernst Gosebruch ('Lieber Herr Gosebruch', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1932, pp. 1–7), which recalled their time as comrades-in-arms in the fight for Expressionism before the First World War.
- 36 The pairing of Expressionist artwork with craft objects produced by non-European peoples as well as objects from the Middle Ages was an idea promoted by the artists of

- the Blaue Reiter and the Brücke themselves – for example, Franz Marc's and Wassily Kandinsky's *Der blaue Reiter Almanach* of 1912 (in English: Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, eds, *The Blaue Reiter Almanach* [1912], trans. Henning Falkenstein with Manug Tervian and Gertrude Hinderlie, ed. Klaus Lankheit, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974) and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's 'Chronik der Brücke' of 1919, in Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 23–5. On the Brücke's debt to the tribal arts, see Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 21–38; for Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in particular, see Hanna Strzoda, *Die Ateliers Ernst Ludwig Kirchners*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2006, pp. 67–72.
- 37 Ernst Gosebruch, 'Das Museum Folkwang in Essen', *Die Kunst*, vol. 33, 1932, pp. 1–16.
- 38 Gosebruch, 'Das Museum Folkwang in Essen', p. 16.
- 39 Gosebruch, 'Das Museum Folkwang in Essen', p. 13.
- 40 Another refurbishment of the early 1920s confirms this. Justi's successor in the Städel'sches Institute in Frankfurt, Georg Swarzenski, belonged to the generation of museum directors who had begun work during the Wilhelmine era and whose views regarding decoration and the museum public changed hardly at all in the new republic. The Städel's new extension opened to the public in 1921 (the rehangings in the old building continued until 1924). An article in the journal *Museumskunde* emphasised the intimate and colourful quality of the new rooms (L. Fischel, 'Der neue Anbau der Städel'schen Galerie', *Museumskunde*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1923, pp. 7–18).
- 41 Gustav Pauli, 'Über die Anordnung einer Gemäldegalerie', in *Karl Koetschau von seinen Freunden und Verehrern zum 60. Geburtstag*, Düsseldorf: Verlag des Kunstvereins für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1928, p. 180.
- 42 See, for example, a sample attached to Hanns H. Josten's article 'Tapeten', in *Reclams Universalum: Moderne Illustrierte Wochenschrift*, vol. 40, no. 34 (1924), pp. 347–50. In the early 1930s the architect Le Corbusier designed a set of wallpapers for the firm Salubra. Le Corbusier, like van Doesburg and Taut, rejected wallpaper throughout the 1920s. By the early 1930s, however, he had come to appreciate certain advantages that wallpaper had over painting the walls directly. In his work for Salubra he kept to the principle of colour as a means of animating a wall spatially. This principle meant that he rejected the firm's traditional patterns and designed wallpaper in single colours only. See Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, pp. 246–8.
- 43 Susanne Bäuml, ed., *Die Kunst zu Werben: das Jahrhundert der Reklame*, exh. cat., Münchner Stadtmuseum, Cologne: DuMont, 1996, p. 189.
- 44 Pauli, 'Über die Anordnung einer Gemäldegalerie', p. 181.
- 45 Justi acquired works by some of Expressionism's most famous exponents, such as Franz Marc (his famous *Tower of the Blue Horses* of 1913–14, destroyed in the Second World War), but also Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein, Erich Heckel, Ernst Kirchner, Otto Kokoschka and others. Scheffler suspected Justi of making these purchases in order to find favour with the new social democratic government and to shed his reputation as the emperor's friend. This ignited a new feud between the two (see Karl Scheffler, *Berlin Museum War*, Berlin: Cassirer, 1921). For Scheffler, Expressionism was a degraded form of popular art. Yet for a younger generation of critics such as Adolf Behne and Paul Westheim, Justi's championing of Expressionism after the war was a reactionary gesture, since the Blaue Reiter and the Brücke movements had reached their peak between 1907 and 1912. As the 1920s progressed, these critics noted the absence from the collection of the Nationalgalerie of more radical and politically motivated new movements such as the Dadaists and Constructivists (see Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 415). Both sets of critics were right. After having enjoyed a remarkably smooth relationship with the Kaiser, Justi adapted easily to the new democratic age. In fact, he even hoped to play a role after the Nazi takeover in 1933. For a short period it seemed that some in the Nazi party were trying to promote German Expressionists like Emil Nolde as personifying Nazi art. In 1933 Alfred Rosenberg, Paul Schultze-Naumburg and the Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur won the day and Justi was forced to retire (see Kurt Winkler, 'Ludwig Justi Konzept des Gegenwartsmuseums zwischen Avantgarde und nationaler Repräsentation', p. 74). The remarkable fact, however, is that Justi always remained true to himself aesthetically, despite the very different political loyalties of those for whom he worked. The Expressionists embodied what he had always championed: the spiritual qualities of the 'folk soul' in a new contemporary form. According to Justi, here was 'the end of the traditional bourgeoisie, the emergence of a broad community of the people in Germany, also a change from materialism to spiritualism' (Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 453). After the Second World War Justi had no difficulties in working as general director of the Berlin collections in East Germany. In his appeal to the broader community of people he was able to operate successfully under the communist government, staging popular exhibitions such as the *Schule des Sehens* ('School of Seeing') in 1955. See his account in *Aufbau*, vol. 11, no. 9 (1955), pp. 837–45.
- 46 Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- 47 Curt Glaser, 'Das neue Haus der Nationalgalerie', *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, vol. 30 (1919), p. 930.
- 48 His attempts to remove the redundant fireplaces and stoves were unsuccessful until 1926 when the state's ownership of the building was finally confirmed.
- 49 Justi, *Werden*, vol. 1, p. 170.
- 50 See, for example, Claudia Rückert and Sven Kuhrau, eds, 'Der Deutschen Kunst': *Nationalgalerie und Nationale Identität, 1876–1998*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1998, figs 27–9.
- 51 Julian Scholl, 'Funktionen der Farbe: das Kronprinzenpalais als farbiges Museum', in Alexis Joachimides et al., eds, *Museumsinszenierungen: zur Geschichte der Institution der Kunstmuseums*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995, pp. 206–19; Alexis Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums, 1880–1940*, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001, pp. 207–10. Joachimides and Scholl argue that contemporary Bauhaus-styled interiors were unimportant to the development of the white wall in museums (Joachimides sees the artist's workshop as a model). As will become clear in the following, I disagree.
- 52 It was featured in the gallerist Alfred Flechtheim's society journal *Der Querschnitt*, vol. 13, no. 9 (1933), p. 400.
- 53 Both conservatives and progressives embraced the body culture. Traditionalists drew on vitalist thinkers such as Ludwig Klages and often rejected the physical activities associated with Anglo-American sports such as soccer, track and athletics. Modernists were relatively ecumenical in their praise of both the vitalist tradition alive in expressive dance and gymnastics as well as the precision movements of contemporary athletics (Wilfried van der Will, 'The Body and the Body Politic as Symptom and Metaphor in the Transition of German Culture to National Socialism', in Brandon Taylor and van der Will, eds, *The Nazification of Art: Art, Design, Music, Architecture and Film in the Third Reich*, Winchester: Winchester Press, 1990, pp. 14–52).
- 54 It would be a mistake, however, to think that these kinds of interiors were dominant in Berlin or elsewhere in the 1920s. While photographs of showrooms in this style were often published in journals and books on interior decoration, it is more difficult to get a picture of actual lived-in rooms. An exception is the set of Berlin interiors photographed by Walde-mar Titzenthaler between 1912 and 1931 for the society magazine *Die Dame* and a remarkable collection of plates taken in the 1920s by the photographer Martha Huth (Enno Kaufhold, *Berliner Interieurs, 1910–1930: Photographien von Walde-mar Titzenthaler*, Berlin: Nicolai, 2001; Bauhaus-Archiv and Landesbildstelle Berlin, eds, *Berliner Lebenswelten der zwanziger Jahre*, Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1996). Both series show that the taste of the time for period rooms continued among the very rich, which makes von der Heydt's decision to use Breuer all the more striking. Bauhaus interiors are virtually absent from Titzenthaler's photographs and form a small minority of Huth's. There are, however, a significant number of interiors inspired by Expressionism. An example is the home of the film director Fritz Lang, photographed in 1923–4. East Asian figurines and woodcarvings are displayed on stark dark walls neatly lined with framed drawings and prints by,

- among others, the Viennese Expressionist Egon Schiele.
- 55 Walter Cohen, 'Haus Lange in Krefeld', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1931), pp. 160–68.
 - 56 Ludwig Justi, 'Ankäufe des Vereins der Nationalgalerie', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1930), p. 17.
 - 57 J. E. Hammann, 'Weiss, alles Weiss: Von der Wertstellung der Farbe "Weiss" in unserer Zeit', *Die Form*, vol. 5, no. 5 (1930), p. 122.
 - 58 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, p. 138.
 - 59 Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Mass Ornament', in Levin, trans. and ed., *The Mass Ornament*, p. 75.
 - 60 Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, p. 67. Kracauer's reading of early films as evincing German authoritarian mentalities during the years of the Weimar Republic has often been challenged, as has his claim, following one of the scriptwriters, Hans Janowitz, that the frame sequences were added to blunt the film's original anti-authoritarian message. See Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 18–105.
 - 61 Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, pp. 181–9. *Neue Sachlichkeit* was a widely used term in the second half of the 1920s after Gustav Hartlaub organised an exhibition with this title in the Mannheim Kunsthalle in 1925 showing a diverse range of pictures that shared a concern for realistic or illusionistic modes of depiction. Literature on the subject is extensive, starting with Franz Roh's *Nach-Expressionismus*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925. See especially Helmut Lethen, *Neue Sachlichkeit, 1924–1932: Studien zur Literatur des 'weissen Sozialismus'*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1970; John Willett, *The New Sobriety: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period, 1917–33*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978; Wieland Schmied, ed., *Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties*, exh. cat., Hayward Gallery, London, 1979.
 - 62 Ward, *Weimar Surfaces*.
 - 63 Carola Jülig, '"Wo nachts keine Lichter brennen, ist finstere Provinz": neue Werbung in Berlin', in Bäuml, ed., *Die Kunst zu Werben*, pp. 65–74.
 - 64 As demonstrated in Elisabeth von Stephani's *Schaufensterkunst* ([1919], 3rd edn, Berlin: L. Schottlaender, 1926), old forms of display, however, continued into the 1920s.
 - 65 For some wonderful examples, see a participant in the reform movement: Stephani, *Schaufensterkunst*.
 - 66 I have discussed this change in 'Patterns of Attention: From Shop Windows to Gallery Rooms in Early Twentieth-Century Berlin', *Art History*, vol. 28 (September 2005), pp. 468–96.
 - 67 Translated in Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, trans. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969, pp. 31–3.
 - 68 Siegfried Giedion, *Walter Gropius: Work and Teamwork*, New York: Reinhold, 1954, p. 49.
 - 69 Martin Wagner and Adolf Behne, eds, *Das neue Berlin*, Berlin: Verlag Deutsche Bauzeitung, 1929, p. 20.
 - 70 Adolf Behne, 'Ausstellung der AHAG am Fischgrund', in Wagner and Behne, eds, *Das neue Berlin*, p. 20.
 - 71 See Magdalena Droste, ed., *Herbert Bayer: das künstlerische Werk, 1918–1938*, exh. cat., Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, 1982, pp. 115–17. For a comprehensive discussion of Bayer's exhibition designs with illustrations, see also Arthur A. Cohen, *Herbert Bayer: The Complete Work*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984, pp. 283–314.
 - 72 On Reich, see Sonja Günther, *Lilly Reich, 1885–1947: Innenarchitektin, Designerin, Ausstellungsgestalterin*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 1988; Matilda McQuaid, ed., *Lilly Reich: Designer and Architect*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996.
 - 73 This collaboration consolidated Reich's and Mies's professional as well as personal relationship. While Reich's practice gained a spatial dimension through this collaboration, Mies's famous sensitivity to the intrinsic qualities of materials clearly owed much to Reich. For a description of the exhibition halls that were part of the Werkbund-organised Weissenhof project, see Karin Kirsch, *Die Weissenhofsiedlung*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1986, p. 31.
 - 74 Peter Chametzky, 'The Post History of Willi Baumeister's Anti-Nazi Postcards', *Visual Resources*, vol. 17 (2001), p. 476.
 - 75 In his famous article on modernity as an incomplete project, Habermas does not discuss modernity in this sense ('Modernity: An Incomplete Project' [1981], trans. Seyla Ben-Habib, in Hal Foster, ed., *Postmodern Culture*, London: Pluto Press, 1985, pp. 3–15), but rather he does so in his assessment of the role of the museum in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in German in 1962 (trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, pp. 40–41). For a critique of Habermas's notion of a bourgeois subject of reason and its abstraction and exclusivity, see Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, trans. Peter Labanyi et al., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993; Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
 - 76 Wallis Miller, 'Mies and Exhibitions', in Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll, eds, *Mies in Berlin*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2001, p. 342.
 - 77 On Kiesler and contemporary avant-garde theatre, see especially Barbara Lesák, *Die Kulisse explodiert: Friedrich Kieslers Theaterexperimente und Architekturprojekte, 1923–1925*, Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1988. On the reception of his scientific theories in America, see R. L. Held, *Endless Innovations: Frederick Kiesler's Theory and Scenic Design*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1977; also Dieter Bogner, ed., *Friedrich Kiesler: Architekt, Maler, Bildhauer, 1890–1965*, Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1988; and Lisa Phillips, ed., *Frederick Kiesler*, exh. cat., Whitney Museum of Art, New York, 1989.
 - 78 Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the George circle are the best known, while Adorno sat on the fence on this issue (see, for example, his 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, New York: Urizen, 1978, pp. 270–99).
 - 79 See the stimulating discussion by Frederic J. Schwartz, 'Book Space: Walter Benjamin, the Kunstwerk-Aufsatz and the Avant-Garde', in *Kritische Berichte*, vol. 3 (2000), pp. 21–43.
 - 80 Theo van Doesburg, 'Das Problem einer aktiven Ausstellungsmethode', *Neues Wiener Journal*, 31 October 1924, p. 5.
 - 81 Theo van Doesburg, 'Schöpferische Forderungen von De Stijl', in *De Stijl*, vol. 5, no. 4 (April 1922), p. 62; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Ad Peterson, vol. 2, Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 1968, p. 205.
 - 82 Friedrich Kiesler, 'Ausstellungssystem Leger und Träger', *De Stijl*, vol. 6, no. 10–11 (1925), p. 138; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Peterson, vol. 2, p. 433.
 - 83 See Thomas Weingraber, 'Rekonstruktion von Kieslers Raumvision', in Bogner, ed., *Friedrich Kiesler*, p. 326.
 - 84 Kiesler, 'Ausstellungssystem', p. 139. In 1925 and 1926 Kiesler demonstrated the flexibility and adaptability of his system. The L- and T-type were incorporated into a model of a floating ideal city that also served as a display area for the Austrian theatre section at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris in 1925, and they appeared again in a theatre show Kiesler was asked to assemble in New York in 1926.
 - 85 Kiesler, who stayed in New York after staging his exhibition there in 1926, became famous with his interactive design of 1942 for Peggy Guggenheim's private gallery Art of this Century (see Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994, pp. 149–52). At this stage, Kiesler had abandoned his former ideal of the construction of an intersubjective community. In the 1930s he had moved into the circle of the Surrealists in exile in New York (Duchamp lived with him and his wife for a period) and his new guiding principle was a form of organic energeticism. Drawing on biology, Kiesler theorised this position in the 1930s as 'Correalism' (Frederick Kiesler, 'On Correalism and Biotechnique: Definition and Test of a New Approach to Building Design', *Architecture Record*, vol. 86, no. 3, 1939, p. 61). He now created spaces that only required individuals. What remained, however, was that Kiesler still worked from the assumption that meaningful museum experience must be the result of an interactive viewer animating the objects on display, whether by using mechanical devices or by a certain engaged kind of experience of them.
 - 86 A German publication of Bogdanov's writings on art appeared in 1918: Alexander Bogdanov, *Die Kunst und das Proletariat*, Leipzig and Wolgast: Kentaur, 1919.
 - 87 Lissitzky and van Doesburg collaborated with

- Hans Richter at the symposium *Constructivist International* held in Düsseldorf in April 1922, where van Doesburg outlined his vision for new exhibition rooms. See *De Stijl*, vol. 5, no. 4 (May 1922), p. 64; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Peterson, vol. 2, p. 206.
- 88 El Lissitzky, 'Exhibition Rooms', in Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* [1968], rev. edn, London: Thames and Hudson, 1980, pp. 366–7.
- 89 Kai-Uwe Hemken, 'Pan-Europe and German Art: El Lissitzky at the 1926 Internationale Kunstausstellung in Dresden', in Frank Lubbers, ed., *El Lissitzky, 1890–1942: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer*, exh. cat., Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1990, pp. 46–55.
- 90 For a very informative account of El Lissitzky's Dresden and Hanover exhibition rooms, see Mary Gough, 'Constructivism Disoriented: El Lissitzky's Dresden and Hannover *Demonstrationsräume*', in Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed, eds, *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow, Los Angeles*: Getty, 2003, pp. 77–125.
- 91 After being left behind with two small sons by the death in 1922 of her first husband, the artistic director Paul Küppers, Sophie Küppers was placed in temporary charge of the Kestner Gesellschaft (Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, pp. 26–7). It was in this capacity that she organised Lissitzky's first one-person show in Hanover. She married Lissitzky after following him to Moscow in 1927.
- 92 For an account of Dörner's work in Hanover, see Samuel Cauman, *The Living Museum: Experiences of an Art Historian and Museum Director, Alexander Dörner*, New York: New York University Press, 1958, pp. 109–11; and Monika Flacke-Knoch, *Museumskonzeptionen in der Weimarer Republik: die Tätigkeit Alexander Dörners im Provinzialmuseum Hannover*, Marburg: Jonas, 1985, pp. 36–99.
- 93 Yet in contrast to Sauerlandt's attempt to convey with colour the atmosphere of life prevailing in the different historical periods, Dörner sought a less emotional installation. He was greatly inspired by the Viennese Alois Riegl's notion of the will to art, which he defended against Panofsky's critique of it. See Alexander Dörner, 'Die Erkenntnis des Kunstwillens durch die Kunstgeschichte', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Kunswissenschaft*, vol. 16 (1933), pp. 216–22. He chose those wall colours that best expressed the prevalent mode of vision of each period. For example, the medieval collection was presented against a dark background, because Dörner thought that this best conveyed the period's mysticism. The Renaissance was shown in stripped-down grey rooms to emphasise the dominant geometrical and rational mode of perception. More conventionally, the Baroque rooms were lined with red velvet and Rococo work hung against walls of delicate pink, gold and oyster white. As he did when showing the early nineteenth century on striped tapestry, Dörner seems to have here taken what were believed to be the prevalent interior colours of the respective ages as embodiments of the prevalent mode of perception.
- 94 In his retrospective account, written after he had emigrated to the US, Dörner states that under the influence of contemporary artists like Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy, Riegl's art history came to seem to him increasingly outmoded (Alexander Dörner, *The Way Beyond 'Art': The Work of Herbert Bayer*, rev. edn, New York: New York University Press, 1958, pp. 17–18). Dörner's shift in thinking will be discussed in the next chapter.
- 95 Dörner changed the works on display quite frequently. Work by the Futurists, Expressionists, De Stijl and Constructivists from Hanover, Cubists and Surrealists (and later work by artists more acceptable to the Nazis) was displayed in the 'Abstract Cabinet' until 1937, when the Nazis destroyed the room (see Flacke-Knoch, *Museumskonzeptionen*, p. 76). In 1968 the room was more or less reconstructed at its original location, then in 1979 it was moved when the modern collection was housed in a new building, the Sprengel-Museum, where it still can be seen today.
- 96 Both El Lissitzky's determination to accommodate the regime and his and his wife's struggle to survive in Stalinist Russia are movingly documented in the letters printed in Margarita Tupitsyn, *El Lissitzky: Beyond the Abstract Cabinet*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, pp. 201–24. Peter Nisbet, however, is critical of Tupitsyn's translation of the letters and asserts that El Lissitzky was fully collaborating with the propagandistic activities of Stalin's regime (Peter Nisbet, 'El Lissitzky circa 1935: Two Propaganda Projects Reconsidered', in Perloff and Reed, eds, *Situating El Lissitzky*, pp. 211–34).
- 97 See, for example, Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 33–74.
- 98 Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 293–9.
- 99 This latter version is published, translated into German and English, by John Bowl, in *El Lissitzky*, exh. cat., Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne, 1976, pp. 60–72. For a discussion of the dates, see Yves-Alain Bois, 'Lissitzky, Malevich and the Question of Space', in Galerie Chauvelin, *Suprematisme*, Paris: Galerie Jean Chauvelin, 1977, pp. 29–46.
- 100 See his letter of 21 March 1924 in Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, p. 46.
- 101 El Lissitzky, 'Prouns', in *El Lissitzky*, exh. cat., Galerie Gmurzynska, p. 63.
- 102 Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*, pp. 294–5.
- 103 Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood, New York: Zone Books, 1997, pp. 153–4 (first published as 'Die Perspektive als "symbolische Form"', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, 1924–1925*, vol. 5, 1927, pp. 258–330).
- 104 Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*, p. 295; El Lissitzky, 'K. und Pangeometrie', in Carl Einstein and Paul Westheim, eds, *Europa-Almanach*, Potsdam: Kiepenhauer, 1925, pp. 103–13; translated into English in Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, pp. 352–8.
- 105 Its reception at the Bauhaus is the subject of Ulrich Müller's *Raum, Bewegung und Zeit im Werk von Walter Gropius und Mies van der Rohe*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004. However, Lissitzky's friend Theo van Doesburg – possibly the strongest advocate of a dynamic space-time architecture in the 1920s – was torn between Einstein's denial of absolute infinite space and the older mystical tradition. The writings of van Doesburg's early close collaborator in the De Stijl group, Piet Mondrian, posit an absolute spatial fourth dimension (see Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*, p. 327). After they met in 1922, van Doesburg and Lissitzky reinforced each other's concern for a dynamic conception of space, but van Doesburg never changed his assumption that space was infinite and universal. See Joost Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, New York: Macmillan, 1974, p. 65. After Lissitzky had studied mathematics and geometry in more detail during his stay in Switzerland in 1924 and come to understand the difference between infinite and unbound space, the issue precipitated Lissitzky's and van Doesburg's subsequent estrangement. In his article in *Europa-Almanach* ('K. und Pangeometrie'), Lissitzky indirectly criticised van Doesburg's use of the fourth dimension as superficial. That the De Stijl artists' spatial vision should be described as no more than interior decoration was in Constructivist circles akin to a Marxist calling someone a renegade. See Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, p. 358. Van Doesburg reacted with predictable hurt in *De Stijl* (vol. 7, no. 9, 1924–5, pp. 135–6; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Peterson, vol. 2, p. 609). That they were no more than decorators was a charge van Doesburg's associate Vilmos Huszar had earlier made against the Bauhaus ('Das Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar', *De Stijl*, vol. 5, no. 9, 1922, pp. 135–8; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Peterson, vol. 2, pp. 266–7).
- 106 Alexander Dörner, 'Die neue Raumvorstellung in der bildenden Kunst', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1931), pp. 30–37.
- 107 There are, however, differences between Lissitzky's and Dörner's vision that are the result of Dörner's continuation of the museum reform movement's ambitions. For a brief discussion of the differences, see Gough, 'Constructivism Disoriented', pp. 107–9.
- 108 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York: Schocken, 1968, pp. 217–51.
- 109 Kasimir Malevich, 'Non-Objective Art and Suprematism', in Larissa A. Zhadova, *Malevich: Suprematism and Revolution in Russian Art, 1910–1930*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1982, p. 282.
- 110 El Lissitzky, 'Proun', *De Stijl*, vol. 5, no. 6 (1922), p. 83; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Peterson, vol. 2, p. 224 (also in a slightly different English translation in Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, pp. 347–8).
- 111 Lissitzky, 'Proun', *De Stijl*, p. 84.
- 112 Lissitzky, 'Prouns', in *El Lissitzky*, exh. cat., Galerie Gmurzynska, p. 67.

- 113 El Lissitzky, 'Element und Erfindung', *ABC: Beiträge zum Bauen*, no. 1 (1924), n. p.
- 114 Theo van Doesburg, 'The Significance of Colour for Interior and Exterior Architecture' [1923], in Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, p. 137.
- 115 Van Doesburg, 'The Significance of Colour', p. 139.
- 116 For a discussion of Ostwald's colour theory, see Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, pp. 257–8.
- 117 Wilhelm Ostwald, *Die Harmonie der Farben* [1918], 2nd edn, Leipzig: Unesma, 1921.
- 118 Vilmos Huszar, 'Iets over die Farbenfiel van W. Ostwald', *De Stijl*, vol. 1, no. 10 (1918), pp. 113–18; reprinted in *De Stijl*, ed. Peterson, vol. 1, pp. 169–74. In 1918 Ostwald's *Die Harmonie der Farben* was on the list of recommended works published in the journal. See Huszar, 'Iets over die Farbenfiel van W. Ostwald', p. 342.
- 119 During the Weimar years, Ostwald's objectivist approach to colour was still controversial at the Bauhaus, but this changed after Itten's departure and the move to Dessau in 1925. Ostwald was invited to lecture there in 1927 and Hinnerk Scheper, now the wall-painting master and responsible for the interior colours of the building, displayed a version of Ostwald's colour circle in the workshop. Colour, following Ostwald's theory, was also taught on Joost Schmidt's course (Wingler, *The Bauhaus*, p. 145). Scheper was the only Bauhaus member to become involved in the selection of wall colours for museums. In 1922 he was asked to provide the colour scheme for the Landesmuseum in Weimar. According to a contemporary report, colour dominated, but in a manner that emphasised the architectural and spatial features of the building rather than their psychological connotations (see Eberhard Schenk zu Schweinsberg, 'Eröffnung des Landesmuseums in Weimar', *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, vol. 33, 1922, p. 166). In general, Scheper's interior decoration – for example, his choice of colours for Gropius's new office after the Bauhaus moved to Dessau – are interesting for the wide variety of tints he uses, taking advantage of the infinite range of possible harmonic colour compositions advocated by Ostwald. Interestingly, though, when he collaborated with Ernst Gosebruch at the newly refurbished Folkwang Museum in Essen, it was Gosebruch's more psychological understanding that prevailed.
- 120 Theo van Doesburg, 'Towards White Painting' [1930]; reprinted in Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, p. 183.
- 121 See, for example, Lissitzky, 'Element und Erfindung', and Van Doesburg, 'Towards White Painting', p. 183.
- 122 On the ideological implications of this understanding, see Wigley's *White Walls, Designer Dresses*.
- 123 Richard Dyer, *White*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 81.
- 124 Paul Linder, 'Das Neue Hamburger Ausstellungsgebäude', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1930), p. 115.
- 125 Walter Holzhausen, 'Die neue Galerie in Dresden', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1931), p. 124.
- 126 Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, pp. 220–24.
- 127 F. K., 'Die neue Gemädegalerie in Dresden: ein Rundgang', *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 9 August 1931; quoted in Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 223.
- 128 Karl Koetschau, letter to the general director, 12 July 1933; quoted in Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 233.
- 129 Yet, as Alexis Joachimides has argued, the rejection of a permanent museum installation in favour of a flexible exhibition hall was driven – much like the effort behind intimate installations around 1900 – by the aim to be more attractive to a greater number of visitors (Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, p. 233).
- 130 Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung*, pp. 220–24.
- 131 On Posse's involvement with the Nazi regime, see Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*, London: Penguin, 2002, pp. 52–4.
- 132 For an interesting discussion of Nazi temporary exhibitions that abandoned the dynamic character of earlier exhibitions, see Wolfgang Kemp, *Foto-Essays: zur Geschichte und Theorie der Fotografie*, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1978, p. 42.
- 133 For documentation, see Sabine Brantl, *Haus der Kunst, 1937–1997: eine Historische Dokumentation*, Munich: Haus der Kunst, 1998. On the exhibition, see also Berthold Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich*, trans. Robert Kimber and Rita Kimber, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980; Taylor and Van der Will, eds, *The Nazification of Art*, Peter Adam, *The Arts of the Third Reich*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1992, pp. 92–119; Dawn Ades et al., eds, *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930–45*, exh. cat., Hayward Gallery, London, 1995, pp. 258–339; Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890–1937*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 193–6.
- 134 Thematic exhibitions were developed in a very different spirit in the 1920s by a set of progressively minded museum directors who hoped to attract a less educated public with popular subjects. At the forefront were two extraordinary gallery directors at the Kunsthalle in Mannheim, Fritz Wichert and his successor Gustav Hartlaub. Wichert, for example, organised a thematic show of Expressionist works under the title *Neue religiöse Kunst* ('New Religious Art') in 1918 and Hartlaub famously produced a survey of new realist art in 1925 that inspired the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('New Objectivity'). Other exhibitions were staged so as to highlight technical or material aspects, such as *Der farbige Stoff* ('The Coloured Fabric') in 1922–3 and *Das farbige Papier* ('The Coloured Paper') in 1924. Gustav F. Hartlaub gave a good account of this and the Kunsthalle's many efforts to widen access to museums in the 1910s and 1920s in 'Das Kraftfeld der Mannheimer Kunsthalle', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1931), pp. 112–22.
- 135 For an illustration of some of the images displayed in this and later shows, see Adam, *The Arts of the Third Reich*.
- 136 Adolf Hitler, 'Peroration of Speech at the Great German Art Exhibition, 1937', trans. John Willett, in Ades et al., eds, *Art and Power*, p. 339. Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels: eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art*, Munich: J. F. Lehmann, 1937.
- 137 See Stephanie Barron, '1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany', in Barron, ed., *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991, p. 20; also Peter-Klaus Schuster, ed., *Die 'Kunststadt' München 1937: Nationalsozialismus und 'Entartete Kunst'*, exh. cat., Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich, 1987; Christoph Zuschlag, *Entartete Kunst: Ausstellungsstrategien im Nazi-Deutschland*, Worms: Werner, 1995; and Katrin Engelhardt, 'Die Ausstellung "Entartete Kunst" in Berlin 1938', in Uwe Fleckner, ed., *Angriff auf die Avantgarde: Kunst und Kunstpolitik im Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007, pp. 89–158.
- 138 Peter Guenther, 'Three Days in Munich, July 1937', in Barron, ed., *Degenerate Art*, p. 43.
- 139 Kracauer, 'The Mass Ornament', pp. 75–86.
- 140 Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, p. 73.
- 141 For this shift in El Lissitzky's work, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's article 'From Faktura to Factography', in Annette Michelson et al., eds, *October: The First Decade*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988, pp. 77–113.
- 142 Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, pp. 84–6.
- 143 Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*, p. 86.
- 144 Tupitsyn, *El Lissitzky*, pp. 42–51.
- 145 Miller, 'Mies and Exhibitions', p. 343.
- 146 Mies refused to take Lilly Reich with him to Chicago (Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 249). She found it difficult to work during the Nazi years, but enthusiastically participated in the activities of the newly found Werkbund after the war (McQuaid, *Lilly Reich*, p. 57).

4 The Spectator as Educated Consumer

- 1 After his first trip to Germany in 1927–8 Barr returned every year until the beginning of the Second World War. He combined his tour of German museums, exhibitions and galleries with extended stays in Paris and brief trips to Italy, England and the Netherlands. On a sabbatical abroad in 1932–3, he lived with his wife Margaret Scolari Barr for six months in Stuttgart, witnessing the rise of Adolf Hitler to Chancellor of the Reich and the increasing intimidations of the Nazi party in the run up to the fatal elections in the spring. See Margaret Scolari Barr, 'Our Campaigns', *New Criterion*, vol. 5 (Summer 1987), pp. 23–74. The standard accounts of the Museum of Modern Art's early history are Anson Conger Goodyear, *The Museum of Modern Art: The First Ten Years*, New York: self-published, 1934; Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art*, New York: Athenaeum, 1973; and Sam

Hunter, 'Introduction', in *The Museum of Modern Art, New York: The History and the Collection*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984, pp. 8–41.

- 2 Letter from Barr to Gropius, 15 September 1938; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. # 82. Barr sought out similar experiments in Russia where he spent two months at the beginning of 1928 (Barr's 'Russian Diary' was posthumously published in *October*, vol. 7, Winter 1978, pp. 10–50, and in Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Defining Modern Art: Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr*, ed. Irving Sandler and Amy Newman, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986, pp. 103–37). Here he immersed himself in the cinema and theatre and met not only the film and theatre directors Eisenstein and Meyerhold, but also the artists El Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Stepanova and Tatlin. They were still able to experiment with visually radical means, albeit in the service of socially useful functions such as propaganda material and exhibition designs. When Barr asked El Lissitzky if he painted, he was astonished to receive the following answer: 'Only when he had nothing else to do, and as that was never, never' (Barr, 'Russian Diary', in Barr, Jr, *Defining Modern Art*, p. 112). Despite Barr's disappointment at not finding very much art in the traditional sense, he understood and admired the projects the artists he met were involved with. Writing up his experience in Russia in an article that appeared after his return to the United States in 1928, he stated: 'it is a courageous attempt to give to art an important social function in a world where from one point of view it has been prostituted for five centuries' (Alfred H. Barr, Jr, 'The "Lef" and Soviet Art', *Transition*, vol. 14, Autumn 1928, pp. 267–70; reprinted in Barr, *Defining Modern Art*, pp. 138–41).
- 3 On one of his frequent trips to Europe, Barr arrived in Berlin in late June and stayed throughout July 1931. His wife Margaret Scolari Barr records only that they saw the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum and the Kronprinzenpalais and admired Schinkel's buildings together with Philip Johnson (Margaret Scolari Barr, 'Our Campaigns', *New Criterion*, vol. 5, Summer 1987, p. 27). During these summer months, however, Johnson visited, as we will see later, Mies van der Rohe's and Lilly Reich's building material exhibition and he

might well have taken Barr along. Here they would have also encountered Gropius's, Bayer's and Moholy-Nagy's exhibition design (see chapter Three). Additionally, according to his wife, Barr saw El Lissitzky's 'Abstract Cabinet' in Hanover in 1928, but this left no trace in his display strategies either. He returned to Hanover in 1935 when he was collecting material for his *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition. See Scolari Barr, 'Our Campaigns', p. 39.

- 4 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, 'A New Museum', in Barr, Jr, *Defining Modern Art*, p. 76. Philip Johnson, who travelled through Germany in 1929 following Barr's instructions as to what to see (Franz Schulze, *Philip Johnson: Life and Work*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 48), told Mary Anne Staniszewski that he and Barr were impressed by 'the way exhibitions were done in Weimar Germany – at the Folkwang Museum in Essen especially' (Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998, p. 64). Johnson returned to Germany together with the Barrs a year later and stopped off at Essen. But whatever impact the Folkwang Museum made, Barr never adopted the strong wall colours that had come into use there and in some other German museums (see chapter Three).
- 5 Justi and Barr did not meet in 1927–8. But in July 1930 on a renewed visit to Berlin, Barr made sure that he made Justi's acquaintance and later wrote to him: 'I cannot tell you how delightful and exhilarating my visit to the Kronprinzenpalais was. It was a very great pleasure to find you and your assistants so enthusiastic about our modern museum in New York and so eager to cooperate with us' (quoted from John Elderfield, ed., *Das MOMA in Berlin: Meisterwerke aus dem Museum of Modern Art, New York*, exh. cat., Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin, 2004, p. 9). The cooperation Barr sought was for an exhibition of contemporary German art, which he staged in New York in 1931. Justi was equally pleased with his contact in North America and made Barr only the second foreign museum director (the other being the German Wilhelm Valentiner in Detroit) on the editorial board of his contemporary art museum journal, *Museum der Gegenwart*.

- 6 Literature on the arts and the New Deal programme is ample. See, for example, Jonathan Harris (*Federal Art and Natural Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), who is particularly interested in the role of the state in the programme.
- 7 Daniel Okrent, *Great Fortune: The Epic of Rockefeller Center*, New York: Viking, 2003, pp. 188–9.
- 8 Okrent, *Great Fortune*, p. 125.
- 9 On this policy change, see Kirk Varnedoe, 'The Evolving Torpedo', in John Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: Continuity and Change*, Studies in Modern Art 5, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, pp. 13–49.
- 10 *Museum of Modern Art Annual Report*, 1931–2; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1930s.
- 11 *Report of the Board of Trustees to the Members of the Museum of Modern Art on the Year's Work, July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1944*; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1940s.
- 12 The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Oral History Project, interview with Edward M. Warburg, 1991, p. 60.
- 13 Publicity for the Museum of Modern Art during its first year in the Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 1.
- 14 Margaret Scolari Barr interviewed by Paul Cummings, 22 February 1974 and 8 April 1974, pp. 18–20; Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (AAA), quoted from Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, p. 62.
- 15 See, for example, Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, p. 62.
- 16 For similar arrangements in New York, see Evelyn Carol Hankins, 'Homes for the Modern: En/Gendering Modern Art Display in New York City, 1913–1939', Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1999, pp. 18–73.
- 17 Letter from Alfred H. Barr to Edward S. King, 10 October 1934; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr Papers.
- 18 It was Wilhelm R. Valentiner, a German, who first displayed contemporary art on white walls in the United States. A year after Alfred Barr had staged an exhibition of German art in the Museum of Modern Art in New York on beige walls, and in the same year that Justi's

assistant at the Nationalgalerie, Ludwig Thormaehlen, had shown German art in Oslo on off-white walls, Valentiner whitewashed the second floor of the Institute of Arts in Detroit for the display of contemporary German art (Margaret Heiden, 'Neue Deutsche Kunst im Detroit Institute of Arts', *Museum der Gegenwart*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1931, p. 15). Valentiner had been trained by Wilhelm von Bode and then later worked as curator at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He returned to Germany to join the workers' Council of Art in the Revolution of 1919. With the sanction of the Council he published a pamphlet calling for reform of the gallery world. In this pamphlet (*Umgestaltung der Museen im Sinne der neuen Zeit*, Berlin: G. Grote, 1919), Valentiner sketched a division of the country's collections. At the top of the hierarchy was a 'Museum for International Art' that would show all masterpieces together in one place for ease of access and comparison. He also sketched its layout and display strategy. Drawing on his experience as an assistant to Bode, Valentiner suggested that the works be displayed in coloured rooms together with furniture and applied arts from the same period. Ideally, each room was to be arranged around a courtyard and made accessible from there. This way the monotonous enfilade of rooms would be avoided. Not surprisingly, his suggestion, promoted with a revolutionary edge, enraged contemporary gallery directors, who saw nothing new in the idea of intimate settings. Otto Falke and Curt Glaser, for example, emitted a furious response in Scheffler's journal *Kunst und Künstler* (vol. 17, 1919, pp. 334–9), and Justi fired off a sarcastic salvo in the *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst* (new series, vol. 30, 1919, pp. 190–200). He never returned to this vision during his time in the United States.

- 19 The first president of MOMA, Anson Conger Goodyear, assembled a comprehensive collection of press reviews in his scrapbooks that cover the first decade of the museum. The reviews collected here on the opening of the new quarters do not mention the wall colours. See The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 15.
- 20 Edward Alder Jewell, 'Art Shown in City', *New York Times*, 2 March 1936; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbook, 40.

- 21 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936.
- 22 For a discussion of the chart, see, for example, W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 230–39; and Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, 'Shaping Modernism: Alfred Barr's Genealogy of Art', *Word & Image*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2000, pp. 387–400.
- 23 On this see, Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, p. 81.
- 24 In the North American context, formalism is usually associated with Barr and the critic Clement Greenberg. The latter's formalism was, however, different from Barr's because Greenberg postulated a totally autonomous realm for the fine arts in which there was no leakage into other realms, not even into the applied arts. See, for example, Greenberg's famous essay 'Modernist Painting', in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4: *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 85–93. Greenberg's development as a critic from Marxism to formalism is discussed in an influential essay by T. J. Clark, 'Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 9, no. 1 (September 1982), pp. 139–56; reprinted in Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, London: Paul Chapman, 1985, pp. 47–63.
- 25 Kandinsky's letter to Barr is paraphrased in Susan Noyes Platt, 'Modernism, Formalism and Politics: The "Cubism and Abstract Art" Exhibition of 1936 at The Museum of Modern Art', *Art Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4 (Winter 1988), p. 292.
- 26 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* [1936], exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art; reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1968, p. 13.
- 27 Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997, pp. 367–8.
- 28 'The Surrealists', *Harper's Bazaar*, November 1936.
- 29 See Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994, pp. 116–33.
- 30 Barr, Jr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, p. 19.
- 31 See Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, pp. 85–98.
- 32 See the images in Varnedoe, 'The Evolving Torpedo', pp. 24, 27.
- 33 Lynn Zelevansky, 'Dorothy Miller's "Americans"', in Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, Studies in Modern Art 4, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994, p. 57.
- 34 See Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s*, London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. Such an interpretation of Abstract Expressionism, however, was disputed by more existentialist readings also current at the time. See Nancy Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Expressionism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 62–104.
- 35 See Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, pp. 189–95.
- 36 For an account of the dispute over the choice of architects, see Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, pp. 189–95, and for the ensuing demotion, see Irving Sandler, 'Introduction', in Barr, Jr, *Defining Modern Art*, pp. 28–30.
- 37 Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, p. 193.
- 38 Goodyear, *The Museum of Modern Art*, p. 128.
- 39 Trevor Thomas, 'Impressions of the Museum of Modern Art', *Museums Journal*, vol. 41, no. 5 (August 1941), p. 98.
- 40 Dominic Ricciotti, 'The 1939 Building of the Museum of Modern Art: The Goodwin–Stone Collaboration', *American Art Journal*, vol. 17, no. 3 (Summer 1985), p. 58.
- 41 The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbook, 52.
- 42 One of the enduring credos of MoMA is what William Rubin, Barr's successor as Director of Painting and Sculpture, called the 'private mode of addressing art' promoted in its galleries from the Goodwin and Stone building to today (William Rubin, quoted in Paul Godberger, 'The New MoMA', *New York Times Magazine*, 15 April 1984, p. 46). Dominic Ricciotti coined the term 'tradition of intimacy' ('The 1939 Building of the Museum of Modern Art', p. 57), and Grunenberg too emphasises the domestic nature of the galleries in the 1939 building (Christoph Grunenberg, 'The Politics of Presentation: The Museum of Modern Art, New York', in Marcia Pointon, ed., *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and North America*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, pp. 192–211). Intimate galleries were one of the least controversial desiderata among museum staff and trustees in the planning of the new museum building that opened in 2005 (see John Elderfield, ed., *Imagining the Future of The Museum of Modern Art*, Studies in Modern Art 7, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998, pp. 31–3).
- 43 Henry McBride, 'Opening of the New Museum of Modern Art', *New York Sun*, 13 May 1939; reprinted in McBride, *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticisms of Henry McBride*, ed. Daniel Catton Rich, New York: Athenaeum, 1975, p. 371.
- 44 Frederick Kiesler, *Contemporary Art Applied to the Store in Its Display*, London: Pitman and Sons, 1930, p. 79.
- 45 Kiesler, *Contemporary Art Applied to the Store and Its Display*, p. 79.
- 46 This was in line with Kiesler's advice to the American shopkeeper (Kiesler, *Contemporary Art Applied to the Store and Its Display*, p. 79).
- 47 For the main exhibition that inaugurated the museum, Barr produced the most ambitious lesson in the history of modern art to date. *Art in Our Time* was a painting, sculpture and prints show that traced the development of nineteenth-century American art as it caught up with the European avant-garde in the twentieth century. Barr did not believe that American contemporary art was of the same high standard as its European counterpart, and so the installation shot illustrated here (pl. 6) shows the moment when, according to him, the works by American nineteenth-century artists whom Barr esteemed for their distinctive vision – such as John La Farge (the landscape on the left), Albert Pinkham Ryder (on the back wall in the left cubicle) and Winslow Homer (picture at the front on the right) – gave way to that American in Paris and London, James McNeill Whistler (middle ground on the right), who led the way to European modernism beginning with Henri Rousseau (just visible in the background on the right) (Alfred H. Barr, Jr, 'Art in Our Time: The Plan of the Exhibition', in *Art in Our Time*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1939, pp. 13–15). For Barr's disdain of American contemporary art until the 1950s (when he was won over by Rauschenberg and Johns), see Zelevansky, 'Dorothy Miller's "Americans"', pp. 57–97.
- 48 Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach first drew attention to the organisation of space at MoMA, which renounces the traditional straight vistas, large spaces and hallways in favour of a passage through a labyrinth ('The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis', *Marxist Perspectives*, vol. 1, no. 4, Winter 1978, pp. 28–51). But in contrast to me, they read this space as primarily inducing dream-like and otherworldly states in the spectator in compensation for the alienated conditions of everyday life.
- 49 Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York: Knopf, 2003.
- 50 A thorough account of Barr's education and early influences is given in Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr, and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, pp. 18–189. See also Rona Roob, 'Alfred H. Barr, Jr: A Chronicle of the Years 1902–1929', *New Criterion*, vol. 5 (Summer 1987), pp. 1–19.
- 51 Barr writing to his parents, quoted in Roob, 'Alfred H. Barr, Jr', p. 9.
- 52 See, for example, Sam Hunter's 'Introduction' in *The Museum of Modern Art*, New York, pp. 8–41.
- 53 This quote comes from one of several nearly identical pre-opening publicity statements written by Barr and issued to various journals in a high-profile publicity campaign. It was published in *Vogue* in October 1929 and is reprinted in Barr, 'A New Museum', in Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Defining Modern Art: Selected Writings of Alfred H. Barr, Jr*, ed. Irving Sandler and Amy Newman, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986, p. 75.
- 54 For an account of these and other venues that made modern art available to an interested public in New York before the advent of the Museum of Modern Art, see Hankins, 'Homes for the Modern', pp. 18–73.
- 55 Only once did Katherine Dreier abandon this restrained gallery scheme when she included simulations of rooms from a contemporary American home in the 1926 exhibition of the Société Anonyme at the Brooklyn Museum. See Hankins, 'Homes for the Modern', pp. 64–7.

- 56 Helen Appleton Read, 'The Whitney Museum', *Brooklyn Eagle*, 22 November 1931; quoted in Hankins, 'Homes for the Modern', p. 171.
- 57 Hankins, 'Homes for the Modern', pp. 138–84. On women and interior decoration, see Karen Haltunen's 'From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration and the Culture of Personality', in Simon J. Bronner, ed., *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880–1920*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1989, pp. 172–8. Also: Juliet Kinchen, 'Interiors: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the "Masculine" and the "Feminine" Room', in Pat Kirkham, ed., *The Gendered Object*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. 12–29; Candace M. Volz, 'The Modern Look of the Early Twentieth-Century House: A Mirror of Changing Lifestyles', in Jessica Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, eds, *American Homes Life, 1880–1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992, pp. 34–5. On Elsie de Wolfe, see especially Penny Sparke, 'The Domestic Interior and the Construction of Self: The New York Homes of Elsie de Wolfe', in Susie McKellar and Penny Sparke, eds, *Interior Design and Identity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 72–91.
- 58 I am indebted here to Christoph Grunenberg's analysis of the Museum of Modern Art: 'The Politics of Presentation', pp. 192–211.
- 59 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Present Status and Future Direction of the Museum of Modern Art*, typescript, p. 2; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr, Papers.
- 60 Artemas Packard, *Report on the Museum of Modern Art*, part 3, 1935–6, pp. 88–9; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1930s.
- 61 Hankins, 'Homes for the Modern', pp. 109–11.
- 62 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, 'Foreword', in *Machine Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1934; reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1969, n. p.
- 63 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, 'Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture', in *Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977, p. 620.
- 64 See *Reaching Out*, Museum of Modern Art 19th Annual Report, vol. 15, no. 4 (1948); The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1940s.
- 65 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, '1929 Multidepartmental Plan for The Museum of Modern Art: Its Origins, Development, and Partial Realization', August 1941, pp. 5–6; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr Papers.
- 66 This has been criticised by Douglas Crimp, among others, in 'The Art of Exhibition', *October*, vol. 30 (Winter 1984); reprinted in Annette Michelson et al., eds, *October: The First Decade*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987, p. 244.
- 67 Alma S. Wittlin, *Museums in Search of a Usable Future*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970, pp. 150–51.
- 68 And it survived despite the fact that Barr was sidelined during the early 1940s: his depressions had made him inefficient in the eyes of the trustees and he had fatefully lost the struggle over who should be the architect of the new building (Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr*, pp. 359–63).
- 69 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Present Status and Future Direction of the Museum of Modern Art*, p. 2; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr Papers.
- 70 For an informative discussion of the competing aims of such mediating organisations, see Charles McGovern, 'Consumption and Citizenship in the United States, 1900–1940', in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Judt, eds, *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 37–58. For a more general account of the development of the mass-consumer society in the United States, see Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984; Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985; William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1993; T.J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*, New York: Basic Books, 1994.
- 71 Meyer Schapiro, 'The Nature of Abstract Art', *Marxist Quarterly*, January–March 1937; reprinted in Schapiro, *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries*, New York: George Braziller, 1979, pp. 185–211.
- 72 Alfred H. Barr, Jr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, 1936; reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1966, p. 18.
- 73 See, for example, Duncan and Wallach, 'The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual', pp. 28–51.
- 74 John Hay Whitney and Nelson A. Rockefeller, 'Foreword', in Alfred H. Barr, Jr, ed., *Masters of Modern Art*, 3rd rev. edn, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1958, p. 7.
- 75 Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War', *Artforum*, vol. 12, no. 10 (June 1974), pp. 39–41. There is extensive literature on the championing of the arts as an expression of liberalism in the United States: Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. For a critique of Guilbaut's concept of ideology written from a more elastic Althusserian perspective, see Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*. For a discussion of the different concepts of liberalism current at the time, see Jachec's *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*.
- 76 *Dedication of Museum of Modern Art by Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, 10 May 1939; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Sound Recordings of Museum-Related Events, 31. Printed in full in the *New York Times*, 11 May 1939.
- 77 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* [1976], expanded edn, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 15.
- 78 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, p. 80.
- 79 One might wonder if the white enclosure that seals art off from the world was not rather a creation of the booming commercial gallery world of the 1960s, a time when artists were using various strategies to subvert the gallery context. See Sandy Nairne, 'The Institutionalization of Dissent', in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, eds, *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 386–410. By this stage, the white cube's meaning had become as O'Doherty described it: an environment for the luxury end of the capitalist market.
- 80 David Rockefeller and his sister-in-law Blanchette continued the family presence on the board of trustees when Nelson retired from the museum in 1953 to work in President Eisenhower's government in Washington, DC (Joseph E. Persico, *The Imperial Rockefeller: A Biography of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982, p. 36). Nelson Rockefeller entered the Museum of Modern Art initially as a trustee in 1932. He left the museum during the Second World War when he became coordinator of the Committee of Inter-American Affairs, returning later as chairman of the board of trustees. In the 1950s he embarked on a full-time political career, first as chair of President Eisenhower's Advisory Committee on Government Organization and later as undersecretary in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Between 1958 and 1973 he was Governor of New York, but returned to federal services in 1974 as Vice-President to Gerald Ford, a post he held until 1976.
- 81 'Beautiful Doings', *Time*, 23 May 1939; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 52.
- 82 'Thinking of Today and Eternal Things', *Newsweek*, 1 June 1964, p. 52.
- 83 Membership recruitment brochure entitled *An Invitation from the Museum of Modern Art*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1940s. In a very similar move sixty years later, Tate Modern in London embarked on a membership recruitment drive that advertised its fabulous club-rooms with roof-top views.
- 84 See figures in *Report of the Board of Trustees to the Members of the Museum of Modern Art on the Year's Work, July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1944*, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1940s.
- 85 Letter from Alfred H. Barr, Jr, to Paul Sachs, 5 May 1939; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr Papers, Personal/Desk c. MoMA-related.
- 86 The occasion came soon enough with the trustees' dinner at the opening of the new building. Giving one of the speeches, Sachs took the opportunity to warn against 'pressure to vulgarize and cheapen our work through the mistaken idea that in such a fashion a broad public may be reached effectively. That is an

- especially tempting error because of the intense competition for public attention in American life. In the end lowering of tone and of standards must lead to mediocrity' (printed in *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. 6, no. 5, July 1939; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1930s).
- 87 Letter from Alfred H. Barr, Jr, to Paul Sachs, 12 May 1939; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr Papers, Personal/Desk C. MoMA-related.
- 88 Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, pp. 126–35.
- 89 Quoted in the membership recruitment brochure *An Invitation from the Museum of Modern Art*, 1941.
- 90 Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr*, pp. 359–63.
- 91 The rehabilitation of this strand is at the heart of Staniszewski's *The Power of Display*.
- 92 Schulze, *Philip Johnson*, p. 48.
- 93 Margret Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts, 1919–1936*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 61–2.
- 94 Philip Johnson, 'In Berlin: Comment on Building Exposition', *New York Times*, 9 August 1931; reprinted in Johnson, *Writings*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 49. Like most commentators, Johnson failed to acknowledge Reich's role in Mies's work in those years. Even though she effectively designed Johnson's New York apartment, he only ever attributed it to Mies. See, for example, Philip Johnson interviewed by Sharon Zane, 18 December 1990; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Oral History Project, interview with Philip Johnson, 1990, p. 126. Two publications have recently attempted to redress this: Matilda McQuaid, *Lilly Reich: Designer and Architect*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996; and Sonja Günther, *Lilly Reich, 1885–1947: Innenarchitektin, Designerin, Ausstellungsgestalterin*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 1988.
- 95 Johnson, *Writings*, p. 49.
- 96 For a good overview of critics' responses to Johnson's tour de force, the *Machine Art* exhibition of 1934, see Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, pp. 157–9.
- 97 Philip Johnson writing in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. 1, no. 3 (November 1933); The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. 34. The text is unsigned, but Philip Johnson states in an interview with Sharon Zane that he wrote it (The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Oral History Project, interview with Philip Johnson, 1990, p. 69).
- 98 In the choice of wall colours Johnson clearly followed the lead of another of his architectural heroes, Le Corbusier. On Le Corbusier's colour schemes for his villas, see Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, chapter 7.
- 99 The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Oral History Project, interview with Philip Johnson, 1990, p. 61.
- 100 See Barr's foreword for the catalogue (Barr, Jr, 'Foreword', *Machine Art*, n. p.).
- 101 Helen Appleton Read, 'Machine Art', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 11 March 1934; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #34.
- 102 Schulze, *Philip Johnson*, pp. 89–90.
- 103 René d'Harnoncourt was appointed director of the curatorial department in 1947 (replacing Barr) and director of MoMA in 1950.
- 104 *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. 1, no. 3 (November 1933); The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Reports and Pamphlets, 1930s.
- 105 The museum continued its direct links with shops, shopping and consumer cultivation with particular vigour after the Second World War. From 1950 until 1954 Edgar J. Kaufmann, Jr, organised a series of *Good Design* exhibitions whose first venue was The Merchandise Mart in Chicago, the nation's largest wholesale department store. Here readily available household goods were displayed under the imprimatur of the Museum of Modern Art. A selection of the very best products was then always shown at the museum itself at the end of the year. See Terence Riley and Edward Eigen, 'Between the Museum and the Marketplace: Selling Good Design', in Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, pp. 151–79.
- 106 John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Minton, Balch, 1934.
- 107 Carol Morgan, 'From Modernist Utopia to Cold War Reality: A Critical Moment in Museum Education', in Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: Continuity and Change*, pp. 151–73.
- 108 John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 9th edn, New York: Capricorn Books, 1958, p. 8.
- 109 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 8.
- 110 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 8.
- 111 John Dewey, 'Pragmatic America' [1922], in Gail Kennedy, ed., *Pragmatism and American Culture*, Boston, MA: Heath, 1950, p. 59.
- 112 John Dewey, 'What I Believe, Revised' [1939], in Kennedy, ed., *Pragmatism and American Culture*, p. 31.
- 113 Dewey, 'Pragmatic America', p. 59.
- 114 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 169. For a useful summary of Dewey's understanding of art experience as a model of democratic politics (and its relationship to contemporary performance art), see Martin Jay, 'Somaesthetics and Democracy: John Dewey and Contemporary Body Art', in Jay, *Refractions of Violence*, New York and London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 163–76.
- 115 It was Alfred Barr who, remembering his visit to the 'Abstract Cabinet' in Hanover in 1935, helped Dorner get a job as director of the art museum of the Rhode Island School of Design after his emigration. Newly installed in 1938, Dorner initially harked back to the atmospheric period rooms he had developed for Hanover and began to put in place an ambitious educational and outreach programme. See Samuel Cauman, *The Living Museum: Experiences of an Art Historian and Museum Director, Alexander Dorner*, New York: New York University Press, 1958, pp. 129–65; Curt Germundson, 'Alexander Dorner's Atmosphere Room: The Museum as Experience', *Visual Resources*, vol. 21, no. 3 (September 2005), pp. 263–73.
- 116 On Dorner and Dewey, see Joan Ockman, 'The Road Not Taken: Alexander Dorner's Way Beyond Art', in R. E. Somol, ed., *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, New York: Monacelli Press, 1997, pp. 80–120.
- 117 Alexander Dorner, *The Way Beyond 'Art': The Work of Herbert Bayer*, rev. edn, New York: New York University Press, 1958, pp. 18–19.
- 118 John Dewey, 'Introduction', in Dorner, *The Way Beyond 'Art'*, p. 10.
- 119 Dorner, *The Way Beyond 'Art'*, p. 223. This paragraph has, not surprisingly, received attention from both of those authors who have examined Dorner's ideological shift of allegiance to the United States and his championship of Herbert Bayer: Stanislaus von Moos, '"Modern Art Gets Down to Business": Anmerkungen zu Alexander Dorner und Herbert Bayer', in Magdalena Droste, ed., *Herbert Bayer: Das künstlerische Werk, 1918–1938*, exh. cat., Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, 1982, p. 105; see also Ockman, 'The Road Not Taken', p. 107.
- 120 Margret Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts, 1919–1936*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, p. 142.
- 121 Ockman, 'The Road Not Taken', p. 102.
- 122 On MoMA's wartime activities, see Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, p. 237.
- 123 László Moholy-Nagy, 'New Approach to Occupational Therapy', in 'Therapy in the Present War: Notes Prepared for the Museum Council of New York by the Museum of Modern Art's Armed Service Program', May 1943; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Alfred H. Barr, Jr Papers, 1.3.i.
- 124 László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, Bauhausbücher 8, Munich: Lange, 1925.
- 125 László Moholy-Nagy, 'New Approach to Occupational Therapy', pp. 1–2 (the emphasis is in the original).
- 126 Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 37–101.
- 127 In 1937 Bayer, still in Germany, was informed by Alfred Barr that he had seen one of his images for the Nazi exhibition catalogue *Das Wunder des Lebens* (The Wonder of Life) in the window of a pharmacist, adapted minimally to sell vitamins for a firm called Funk-Dubin (letter from Alfred Barr to Herbert Bayer, 19 February 1937; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #82). Bayer himself, however, reused several of his images, including the network of motorways that he had employed in his catalogue spread for the Nazi exhibition *Das Wunder des Lebens* of 1935 (pl. 80), when he began to work for American clients (see Ockman, 'The Road Not Taken', p. 111).
- 128 Bayer acknowledged in a letter to his former Bauhaus colleague Alexander Schawinski (who had found employment with Joseph and Anni Albers at Black Mountain College) that,

although he still had reasonably good work in Germany, he too was now feeling a cold political wind blowing – a painting by him had been included in the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in 1937 (letter from Herbert Bayer to Alexander Schawinski at Black Mountain College, 11 December 1937; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #82). Moreover, Bayer, although separated, was married to an American Jew.

- 129 Herbert Bayer, 'Fundamentals of Exhibition Design', *Production Manager (PM)*, vol. 6, no. 2 (December 1939–January 1940), p. 17. Although the article appeared in 1939–40, the text is dated 1937.
- 130 The second part of Dorner's *The Way Beyond 'Art'* is entirely dedicated to a discussion of Bayer's work.
- 131 Moos, 'Modern Art Gets Down to Business', p. 102; Ockman, 'The Road Not Taken', p. 112.
- 132 Cauman, *The Living Museum*, p. 122. Also Arthur A. Cohen, *Herbert Bayer: The Complete Work*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984, pp. 41–2.
- 133 The *Bauhaus*, 1919–1928 exhibition was limited to the years of Gropius's directorship, because Mies, whose personal rivalry with Gropius had reached new heights over the Harvard appointment (see Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 207), refused to collaborate and Hannes Meyer's years were presumably edited out for fear of giving the enterprise a communist slant.
- 134 Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius, eds, *Bauhaus*, 1919–1928, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1938.
- 135 See the letter from Wassily Kandinsky to Herbert Bayer, 4 December 1937; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #82.
- 136 Letter from Wilhelm Wagenfeld to Herbert Bayer, 26 November 1937; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #82. In 1933 Wagenfeld was one of the few influential members of the Deutscher Werkbund who publicly objected to the *Gleichschaltung* ('bringing into line') of the organisation. But when he became the artistic director of the United Lausitzter Glassworks in

1935 his attitude changed. See Lore Kramer, 'Marginalien zum Industriedesign im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland: Erinnerungen, Spuren, Zitate und Reflektionen', in Sabine Weissler, ed., *Design in Deutschland, 1933–45: Ästhetik und Organisation des Deutschen Werkbundes im 'Dritten Reich'*, Giessen: Anabas, 1990, pp. 62–3.

- 137 Letter from Herbert Bayer to Walter Gropius, 15 February 1938; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #82.
- 138 Dorner, *The Way Beyond 'Art'*, p. 201.
- 139 'Installation List', in The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #83.
- 140 Alfred Barr objected to the terms because he found them pretentious and he himself suggested the term 'Bauhaus idea' rather than 'synthesis' (letter from Alfred Barr to Walter Gropius, 10 December 1938; The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #82). His suggestion seems to have been solely adopted in the wall label outside the cubicle.
- 141 Bayer, 'Fundamentals of Exhibition Design', p. 17.
- 142 See, for example, Walter Gropius's account of the Bauhaus's aims in *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, London: Faber and Faber, 1935. Similarly, the widely read architectural critic Adolf Behne declared that styles in history were a sign that cultures were unresolved and divided by class structures. The new functional architecture marked, according to Behne, the overcoming of style (Adolf Behne, *Eine Stunde Architektur*, Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Fritz Wedekind, 1928, p. 21).
- 143 Bayer, 'Fundamentals of Exhibition Design', p. 17.
- 144 Bayer, 'Fundamentals of Exhibition Design', p. 18.
- 145 Dorner, *The Way Beyond 'Art'*, pp. 16–17.
- 146 For a good summary of the critical responses, see Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, pp. 145–51.
- 147 For a comprehensive discussion, see Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, pp. 209–59.
- 148 Roland Barthes was scathingly critical of the exhibition's 'Adamism', which he saw as no more than a mystification of the injustices that

exist in the world (*Mythologies* [1957], trans. Annette Lavers, London: Cape, 1972, pp. 100–02).

- 149 Dorner, *The Way Beyond 'Art'*, p. 207.
- 150 Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War', pp. 39–41.
- 151 *Harper's Bazaar*, July 1939, p. 47.
- 152 *Vogue*, 15 July 1939, p. 25.

5 The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum

- 1 Although space does not permit it here, it would be fascinating to contrast the display of modern art in Western and Eastern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, given that in the East the promotion of consumerist attitudes clearly played no role in the exhibition of art.
- 2 Since the first *Documenta*, the name has been given as *documenta*, following the unsuccessful 1920s initiatives (popular at the Bauhaus, for example) of abandoning the use of capitals in German. Since the exhibition in 1992, however, the organisers have opted more and more for a capital, which seems less odd in English. For this reason, I have decided to use *D* rather than the original *d*.
- 3 In Germany the *Documenta* has received considerable critical attention ever since the 1970s, yet neither the historical context of the display strategies nor the envisaged spectator has been discussed. Most commentators concentrate on a critical discussion of what works were selected for the shows. There have, however, been several extremely helpful source collections and reconstructions of the legendary displays of the 1950s and 1960s: Dieter Westecker, ed., *documenta-Dokumente, 1955–1968: vier internationale Ausstellungen moderner Kunst*, Kassel: Georg Wenderoth, 1972; Manfred Schneckenburger, ed., *documenta: Idee und Institution – Tendenzen, Konzepte, Materialien*, Munich: Bruckmann, 1983; Kurt Winkler, 'II. documenta '59: Kunst nach 1945', in *Stationen der Moderne: die bedeutenden Kunstaustellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, exh. cat., Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, 1988, pp. 426–73; Walter Grasskamp, 'documenta – kunst des xx. jahrhunderts: internationale ausstellung im museum fridericianum in kassel – 15. Juli bis

18. September 1955', in Bernd Klüser and Katharina Hegewisch, eds, *Die Kunst der Ausstellung: eine Dokumentation dreissig exemplarischer Kunstaustellungen dieses Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1991, pp. 116–25; Harald Kimpel, *documenta: die Überschau: Fünf Jahrzehnte Weltkunstaustellung in Stichwörtern*, Cologne: DuMont, 2002. The *Documenta* as a cultural phenomenon is analysed in: Barbara Manns and Johannes Nawrath, *Documenta: Versuch einer politischen und ideologischen Analyse ihrer Geschichte*, Kassel: Wissen und Fortschritt, 1977; Volker Rattemeyer, ed., *documenta: trendmaker im internationalen Kunstbetrieb?*, Kassel: Stauda, 1984; Marianne Heinz, 'Abstraktion und Gegenständigkeit: die documenta II', in Monika Wagner, ed., *Moderne Kunst*, vol. 2, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1991, pp. 533–51; Ulrike Wollenhaupt-Schmidt, *documenta 55: eine Ausstellung im Spannungsfeld der Auseinandersetzung um die Kunst der Avantgarde, 1945–1960*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994; Walter Grasskamp, 'Degenerate Art and Documenta I: Modernism Ostracized and Disarmed', in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 163–94 (this essay was originally published without the introduction in Walter Grasskamp, *Die unbewältigte Moderne: Kunst und Öffentlichkeit*, Munich: Beck, 1989, pp. 77–119); Inga Lemke, *Documenta-Dokumentationen*, Marburg: Jonas, 1995; Harald Kimpel, *documenta: Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Cologne: DuMont, 1997. More recently, a touring exhibition on the history of the *Documenta*, curated by Michael Glasmeier, opened in Kassel and visited Brussels, Salamanca, Warsaw and cities in Asia. The catalogue is available in German and English: Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel, eds, *archive in motion: documenta manual*, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, 2005.
- 4 Arnold Bode, 'Einführung', in *documenta III*, vol. 1: *Malerei, Skulptur*, exh. cat., Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 1964, p. xix.
- 5 The best-known example of a museum addressing this dilemma is the Museum of Modern Art in New York, originally envisaged by Alfred Barr as a 'torpedo' that moved into the future, shedding the past. The commitment

- to move work that was more than fifty years old to the Metropolitan Museum was abandoned when it became clear that MOMA would lose crown jewels such as Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*. On the policy change, see Kirk Varnedoe, 'The Evolving Torpedo', in John Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: Continuity and Change*, Studies in Modern Art #5, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, pp. 13–49.
- 6 One of its most successful pioneers was Nicholas Serota after he became director of the Tate Gallery in London in 1988. A year later he inaugurated a programme called *New Displays*, in which the collection was rotated and rearranged on an annual basis.
 - 7 The rise of the curator as the greatest star of the show became a noticeable phenomenon in Europe in the 1980s. Harald Szeemann, Rudi Fuchs and Jan Hoet, all former *Documenta* directors, are perhaps best known for the way they promoted themselves in organising exhibitions. For a critique of their exhibition strategies, see Debora J. Meijers, 'The Museum and the "Ahistorical" Exhibition: The Latest Gimmick by the Arbiters of Taste, or an Important Cultural Phenomenon?', in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, eds, *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 7–20. For a more general discussion of the rise of the curator as hero, see Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, 'From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position', in Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, eds, *Thinking about Exhibitions*, pp. 231–50.
 - 8 On Arnold Bode's life and work see, most recently, Marianne Heinz, ed., *Arnold Bode: Leben und Werk, 1900–1977*, exh. cat., Neue Galerie, Kassel, 2000.
 - 9 Theodor Heuss, 'Speech on the occasion of the opening of the 1955 National Garden Festival in Kassel', quoted in Roger M. Buergel, 'The Origins', in Glasmeier and Stengel, eds, *archive in motion*, p. 173.
 - 10 Arnold Bode, 'Bode-Plan', manuscript 1954, documenta Archiv, d1M20. Excerpts from this manuscript are quoted in Glasmeier and Stengel, eds, *archive in motion*, p. 172.
 - 11 Heinrich August Winkler, *Deutsche Geschichte: der lange Weg nach Westen*, Munich: Beck, 2000–02, vol. 2, p. 142. It was also politically significant that the *Documenta* did not highlight artists' national origins, in contrast, for example, to the Venice Biennale.
 - 12 See, for example, the review by Hans Curjel that appeared in an interior decoration journal: 'The various materials – brickwork, heraklith panels, plastic sheeting etc. – loosen the dogmatic stiffness of the walls. Between the paintings or sculptures and the wall materials an extremely intriguing relationship is set in motion that intensifies and sets free the power that resides in the works. The monotony of the eternal walls that have a deadening effect in many exhibitions, in many museums, has disappeared. The I. Documenta does not only present a rare and essential (*wesentlichen*) type of exhibition display, it realises a new exhibition style, one that was created and developed as an exhibition method by important Italian and North American curators and that corresponds visually and spiritually with today's existence' ('Pressestimmen zur I. documenta 1955', *Innenarchitektur*, vol. 3, no. 10, April 1965, pp. 628–30; quoted from Schneckenburger, ed., *documenta*, p. 45).
 - 13 Much has been written on the role of consumption in West Germany after the Second World War. See, for example, Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten: Freizeit, Massenmedien, und 'Zeitgeist' in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre*, Hamburg: Christians, 1995; Erica Carter, *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997; Jennifer A. Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches: Housework, Consumption and Modernity in Germany*, Oxford: Berg, 1999; Hanna Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
 - 14 Werner Haftmann, *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert: eine Entwicklungsgeschichte*, 2 vols, Munich: Prestel, 1954–5. Although both Bode and Haftmann dominated the first *Documenta*, they worked in a team of five, including the curators Alfred Hentzen and Kurt Martin, as well as the sculptor and director of the Frankfurt Art College, Hans Mettel (Kimpel, *documenta: Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, p. 166).
 - 15 As he acknowledges in his book, Haftmann's understanding of the development of modern art owed much to the Museum of Modern Art and to Alfred Barr in particular (Haftmann, *Malerei*, vol. 1, p. 13). Before the English translation appeared in 1960, expanded by a discussion of artistic developments in Britain and North America, Haftmann was able to visit the Museum of Modern Art, where he met Alfred Barr in person (Werner Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960, vol. 1, p. 9).
 - 16 Werner Haftmann, 'Einführung', in *documenta* 2, vol. 1: *Malerei*, exh. cat., Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 1959, p. 15.
 - 17 Haftmann, 'Einführung', in *documenta* 2, p. 17.
 - 18 The point has been made frequently, most recently by Philipp Gutbrod, 'Werner Haftmann's Introduction to the *Documenta* 2 Catalogue', in Glasmeier and Stengel, eds, *archive in motion*, pp. 197–9.
 - 19 Walter Ulbricht, 'Rede vor Schriftstellern, Brigaden der sozialistischen Arbeit und Kulturschaffenden in Bitterfeld, 24. April 1959', in Elimar Schubbe, ed., *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED*, Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972, pp. 552–62.
 - 20 Haftmann's interest in modern art began when he was a student in Berlin in the 1920s, and his writings of the 1950s still show traces of the then dominant Expressionist understanding. *Painting in the Twentieth Century* places a heavy emphasis on Impressionism and Expressionism. Haftmann follows Justi in giving a high importance to Italian modern art, but, like Justi, he gives relatively little attention to Constructivism and the Bauhaus. According to Haftmann's *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, Picasso in France and Beckmann and Kirchner in Germany had begun to translate the visible world into 'hieroglyphs of inner messages', while Miró and the other Surrealists worked in the other direction, from their inner life towards the visible world (Haftmann, *Malerei*, vol. 1, p. 428, and Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1, p. 307).
 - 21 This point is argued in Walter Grasskamp's 'Degenerate Art and Documenta 1', in Sherman and Rogoff, eds, *Museum Culture*, pp. 163–94.
 - 22 Grasskamp, 'Degenerate Art and Documenta 1', in Sherman and Rogoff, eds, *Museum Culture*, p. 171. Harald Kimpel has placed the photowall in the context of contemporary intellectual debates in *documenta: Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 266–70.
 - 23 Werner Haftmann, *Fritz Winter: Triebkräfte der Erde*, Munich: Piper, 1957, p. 50.
 - 24 See Marianne Heinz, 'Abstraktion und Gegenständlichkeit', in Wagner, ed., *Moderne Kunst*, vol. 2, pp. 533–7.
 - 25 Susanne Carwin, *Die Kultur*, 15 August 1959; quoted from Schneckenburger, ed., *documenta: Idee und Institution*, p. 60.
 - 26 Marieluise Franke, *Aachener Volkszeitung*, 5 August 1959; quoted in Heinz, 'Abstraktion und Gegenständlichkeit', in Wagner, ed., *Moderne Kunst*, vol. 2, p. 536.
 - 27 Ever since the 1970s critics have argued that the success of Abstract Expressionism in Europe after the war was the outcome of a concerted diplomatic effort on the part of the US government (see, most recently, Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, London: Granta, 1999). One institution through which the CIA worked was the Museum of Modern Art, and in particular its International Program and Council, which was chaired by Porter A. McCray. McCray was responsible for the selection of American works in the second *Documenta*. The USA's covert cultural operations also sought the cooperation of people abroad. As Nancy Jachec has shown, it was through its Leaders and Specialists Grant Program (LSGP) that the US government hoped to identify the kind of American art that would best support its interests abroad (Nancy Jachec, 'Transatlantic Cultural Politics in the Late 1950s: The Leaders and Specialists Grant Program', *Art History*, vol. 26, no. 4, September 2004, pp. 533–55). It is not clear if Werner Haftmann was a beneficiary of this programme when he went to the United States on extended visits in 1957 and 1959 (Nancy Jachec could not find his name in her notes taken from the files of the LSGP [email to the author, 26 September 2005]). His colleague and collaborator on the selection committee for the second *Documenta*, the critic Will Grohmann, was a beneficiary in 1954, however. In general, critics in West Germany were much more receptive to American Abstract Expressionism than were those in Italy or France.
 - 28 Werner Haftmann, 'Von den Inhalten der modernen Kunst' (Speech given at the opening of

- Documenta II* on 11 July 1959), in Haftmann, *Skizzenbuch: zur Kultur der Gegenwart, Reden und Aufsätze*, Munich: Prestel, 1960, pp. 128–9.
- 29 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn, London: New Left Books, 1983, p. 113.
- 30 On changes in modes of consumption, see Wolfgang König, *Geschichte der Konsumgesellschaft*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000. For 1950s Germany, see Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten*.
- 31 Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen: vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', in *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mayyino Moninari, vol. 1, Munich: dtv/de Gruyter, 1967, p. 273.
- 32 On the one side were those, like Werner Haftmann, who saw in abstract art the ultimate freedom of expression, and on the other were those who saw in it, in the words of a famous art historian of the time, Hans Sedlmayr, 'a loss of the centre', a detachment from the core values that anchored humanity (Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte: die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symbol der Zeit*, Salzburg: O. Müller, 1948). Sedlmayr's reputation as an art historian was tainted after the war because of his enthusiastic collaboration with the Nazi regime in Vienna after the *Anschluss*. On Sedlmayr's art history, see Frederic J. Schwartz's excellent *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 137–77. Adorno participated in two important discussions on modern art in 1950 and 1959, the *Darmstädter* and the *Baden-Badener Kunstgespräche* (Wollenhaupt-Schmidt, *documenta 1955*, p. 250).
- 33 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum' [from *Prismen*, 1955], in *Gesammelte Schriften: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft 1*, vol. 10.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977, p. 181.
- 34 In October 1959 Adorno was invited to talk about contemporary music as part of the programme of the second *Documenta*. See Philipp Gutbrod, 'Werner Haftmann's Introduction to the *Documenta 2* Catalogue', in Glasmeier and Karin Stengel, eds, *archive in motion*, fn. 20. On the *Documenta*'s anti-institutional orientation, see Kimpel, *documenta*, p. 305.
- 35 Bode, 'Einführung', in *documenta III*, p. xix.
- 36 Unsurprisingly, Albert Schulze Vellinghausen calls the *Documenta* a 'festival' in his review 'Olympia der Kunst: Zur "documenta II – Kunst nach 1945" in Kassel', in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 July 1959.
- 37 Grasskamp, 'Degenerate Art and Documenta 1', in Sherman and Rogoff, eds, *Museum Culture*, p. 163.
- 38 For an investigation into the proliferation of such events, see René Block, ed., *Das Lied von der Erde*, exh. cat., Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 2000.
- 39 A third (but later) influence was a Picasso retrospective held in the Palazzo Reale in Milan that much impressed Bode in 1953. Here, as in Kassel, a war-damaged eighteenth-century palace was not restored for the exhibition. Instead, the paintings were suspended on slender metal frames in front of unfinished walls that showed the palace's former glory, as well as the machine-age damage that had been done to them. (See Kimpel, *documenta: Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 295–6.)
- 40 Arnold Bode, 'Autobiographische Notizen', in Heinz, ed., *Arnold Bode*, p. 142.
- 41 Arnold Bode, *Arnold Bode: documenta Kassel*, ed. Lothar Orzechowski, Kassel: Weber und Weidemeyer, 1986, p. 26. This was repeated by Bode's wife Marlou in an interview with the journalist Lothar Orzechowsky ('Was war, was ist: ein Gespräch mit Marlou Bode', in Bode, *Arnold Bode: documenta Kassel*, p. 19).
- 42 Arnold Bode, 'Das grosse Gespräch: Interview mit Professor Arnold Bode', *Kunst*, vol. 4, no. 2 (August 1964), pp. 35–8.
- 43 Bode, 'Einführung', in *documenta III*, p. xix, quoting the English translation in Glasmeier and Stengel, eds, *archive in motion*, p. 210.
- 44 Grasskamp, 'documenta – kunst des xx. Jahrhunderts', in Klüser and Hegewisch, eds, *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*, p. 120.
- 45 Bettina M. Becker, 'Vom anonymen Raumgestalter zum prominenten Designer', in Heinz, ed., *Arnold Bode*, p. 47.
- 46 Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, p. 109.
- 47 Arnold Bode in Wend Fischer, 'Göppinger Plastics', *Werk und Zeit*, vol. 4 (1954), p. 3, quoting from Thomas Richter, "... zweckbewusstes, phantasievolles Experimentieren!": Arnold Bodes Entwürfe für Möbel, Plastics und Tapeten', in Heinz, ed., *Arnold Bode*, pp. 30–31.
- 48 Max Burchartz in Fischer, 'Göppinger Plastics', p. 4; quoted after Richter, "... zweckbewusstes, phantasievolles Experimentieren!", p. 31.
- 49 *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 10 October 1959; quoted in Winkler, 'II. documenta '59: Kunst nach 1945', in *Stationen der Moderne*, p. 433.
- 50 The fifth *Documenta* was the first in which Bode did not play a role. He was replaced by the Swiss curator Harald Szeemann, who was much more in tune with the current politicisation of the art world.
- 51 Claes Oldenburg and Emmett Williams, eds, *Store Days: Documents from the Store (1961) and Ray Gun Theater (1962)*, New York: Something Else Press, 1967.
- 52 But it had its roots in the 1930s. See Kathleen James, 'From Messel to Mendelsohn: German Department Store Architecture in Defence of Urban Economic Change', in Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain, eds, *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850–1939*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, pp. 252–78.
- 53 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art, 1956–1966', in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989, pp. 39–61.
- 54 See the artists' programme and report translated in Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996, pp. 100–01.
- 55 The old avant-garde understanding of art as a training ground for the demands of modern living was, however, briefly revived in the 1950s by the Independent Group in London (David Robbins, ed., *The Independent Group*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990; Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945–59*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). In a display that three members of the group – Richard Hamilton, John McHale and John Voelcker – organised on the occasion of a large group show at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1956, the world of consumption was presented as a challenge to the sensory apparatus – a challenge that the installation would help to meet. The exhibition *This is Tomorrow* consisted of twelve groups, in each of which an artist, a designer and an architect were asked to collaborate on the design of an assigned space. The aim was to overcome specialisation in the arts and encourage an interdisciplinary approach (see Lawrence Alloway's introduction to the catalogue 'Design as a Human Activity', in *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1956, n. p.). Hamilton, McHale and Voelcker produced a structure consisting of three asymmetrical rooms filled with various images from the commercial world and devices that challenged visitors' vision, hearing and sense of smell, and prevented them from assuming the contemplative mode of spectatorship normally associated with the exhibition of art (for documentation, see Robbins, ed., *The Independent Group*, pp. 138–9). The guiding idea for Hamilton, McHale and Voelcker was a carnival funhouse. As McHale made clear in the catalogue, the artists' aim was in true avant-garde spirit: 'to provoke acute awareness of our sensory function in an environmental situation' (John McHale, 'Are They Cultured?', in *This is Tomorrow*, n. p.). Moreover, as Hamilton added, it was designed to develop 'our perceptive potentialities to accept and utilize the continual enrichment of visual material' (Richard Hamilton, 'Are they Cultured?', in *This is Tomorrow*, n. p.).
- 56 Charles Saumarez Smith, 'Narratives of Display at the National Gallery, London', *Art History*, vol. 30 (September 2007), p. 620.
- 57 Timothy Clifford, 'Introduction', in *A Century of Collecting, 1882–1982: A Guide to Manchester City Art Galleries*, Manchester: City of Manchester Cultural Services, 1983, p. 30.
- 58 In fact, an inventory of the National Gallery's furniture in 1856 lists only 7½ dozen oak chairs and one rough deal table (*Inventory of Furniture in the National Gallery, Supplied by the Office of Works*, April 1856, National Gallery Archive, NG5127/1856).
- 59 This is intelligently argued in Marion Ackermann, *Farbige Wände: zur Gestaltung des Ausstellungsraumes von 1880 bis 1930*, Wolfenbüttel: Minerva, 2003.
- 60 In art galleries with historic collections, a hybrid mixture of retro and modern interior decoration is most common today. A good example of this is the Getty Museum, which relocated in 1997 to a hilltop above a freeway

in Brentwood, Los Angeles. For the new venue, the architect Richard Meier created a retreat with luxuriant gardens, sensuous cascades and lovely fountains and pools. The four buildings for the collection are undeniably modern, yet the wall colours allude to the nineteenth-century museum interior. Meier has publicly distanced himself from this choice of wall colours. Moreover, the New York interior decorator Thierry Despont was invited by the Getty trustees to design the eighteenth-century French furniture rooms, recreating sumptuous traditional interiors with faux-marble wainscoting, rich damask wall-hangings, plastic mouldings and dentillated cornices. For Meier, this was an affront to his consciously modernist building. In his opinion, muted, neutral shades would have been more appropriate (Michael Brawne, *The Getty Center: Richard Meier & Partners*, London: Phaidon, 1998, p. 34).

- 61 The *Art Newspaper*, for example, reported a 21 per cent rise in art exhibition attendance across the globe for the year 2004 ('Exhibition Visitor Figures in 2004', *Art Newspaper*, no. 156, March 2005, p. 11).
- 62 Ilya Kabakov, *On the Total Installation*, Stuttgart: Cantz, 1995.
- 63 Ilya Kabakov and Emilia Kabakov, *The House of Dreams*, exh. cat., Serpentine Gallery, London, 2005.
- 64 Many such experiences were reported in the press. See, for example, Jonathan Jones, 'Reflected Glory', *The Guardian*, 30 October 2003.
- 65 Several books provide a good survey of the new museums and their architectural briefs: Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, New York: Monacelli Press, 1998; Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Angeli Sachs, eds, *Museums for a New Millennium*, Munich: Prestel, 1999; Gerhard Mack, *Art Museums into the 21st Century*, Basel: Birkhäuser, 1999; Frank Maier-Solgg, *Die Neuen Museen*, Cologne: DuMont, 2002. It is indicative of the way in which display questions have been taken for granted that none of these works discusses the interiors of the new galleries in any depth.
- 66 The Museum of Modern Art's new extension almost doubled the museum's size and led to record numbers of visitors – attendance during the museum's inaugural year in the new build-

ing, from 20 November 2004 to 19 November 2005, was 2.67 million according to Margaret Doyle of the MoMA Press office (email communication with the author, 15 May 2006).

- 67 The annual attendance figures for the Guggenheim in Bilbao have since dropped to about 600,000.
- 68 For a critique of this, see Hilmar Hoffmann, ed., *Das Guggenheim Prinzip*, Cologne: DuMont, 1999.
- 69 Karl Sabbagh, *Power into Art: Creating Tate Modern, Bankside*, London: Penguin, 2000, pp. 207–15.
- 70 Frances Spalding, *The Tate: A History*, London: Tate Galley Publishing, 1998.
- 71 In 2006 the entire collection was rearranged. The themes chosen were 'Material Gestures', 'Poetry and Dream', 'Idea and Object' and 'States of Flux'. A seminal art movement was now the focus of each display, around which predecessors and successors were grouped. In 'Material Gestures' post-war abstraction was the focus; in 'Poetry and Dream' it was Surrealism; in 'Idea and Object' Minimalism; and in 'States of Flux' Cubism. See Frances Morris, 'From Then to Now and Back Again: Tate Modern Collection Displays', in Morris, ed., *Tate Modern: The Handbook*, London: Tate Publishing, 2006, pp. 21–30. Interestingly, in some rooms of the 'Poetry and Dream' section, pictures were hung more densely than usual and in two tiers. This, as a photograph in Frances Morris's account suggests (p. 26), was done in recognition of the Surrealists' own display strategy seventy years earlier.
- 72 The architect Jacques Herzog seems to have a more transcendental view of the art gallery. In an interview, he discussed the place of art in the modern world and made reference to a neon sculpture by the American artist Bruce Nauman (Gerhard Mack, 'The Museum as Urban Space: Interview with Jacques Herzog on the Projects for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Tate Gallery of Modern Art, London', in Mack, *Art Museums into the 21st Century*, pp. 37–44). That work spells out the words 'The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths', and Herzog takes it as expressing the art gallery's mission. This view of the role of art is both at odds with the Tate Modern curatorial team and Nauman himself. Nauman first displayed this sculpture in the storefront where he was living and

working at the time. In that context, its role as an ironic criticism of the traditional, transcendental picture of the artist would have been unmistakable; taken out of context, Herzog completely inverts the work's point.

- 73 John Elderfield, ed., *Imagining the Future of The Museum of Modern Art*, Studies in Modern Art 7, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998, p. 33.
- 74 Elderfield, ed., *Imagining the Future of The Museum of Modern Art*, p. 32.
- 75 John Elderfield, 'The New Installation at MoMA', *Art Newspaper*, no. 152 (November 2004), p. 21.
- 76 Elderfield, 'The New Installation at MoMA', p. 21.
- 77 Arguably, it was the Swiss curator Harald Szeemann who initiated this trend in 1975 with his highly acclaimed exhibition *Die Junggesellenmaschine* ('The Bachelor Machine') at the Kunstalle in Bern, where he showed modern and contemporary work that he thought was an extension of Duchamp's ironic conception of a bachelor machine.
- 78 Again, however, this has been a long-standing concern. Barr, for example, battled hard to get windowed space into the new building in 1939. Interestingly, the conviction that this was a desirable way to exhibit art was first expressed in the eighteenth century when the Belvedere in Vienna was built (see chapter One). Here, however, the windows were placed so that the spectators could look out on the beauties of nature and so heighten their appreciation of the beauty within. Nowadays, the gallery visitors are for the most part confronted with the gritty reality of townscapes in areas judged ripe for urban renewal.
- 79 However, this too is not as great a departure as it might seem. When the Museum of Modern Art in New York opened its 1939 building it opened itself to the street, inviting visitors in through the canopy, as a department store would do for its customers (see Chapter Four).
- 80 Some of them are discussed in Chantal Béret, 'Shed, Cathedral or Museum?', in Christoph Grunenberg and Max Hollein, eds, *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, and Tate Liverpool, 2002, pp. 77–8.
- 81 Chuihua Judy Chung et al., eds, *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, Cologne: Taschen, 2001.

- 82 Robert Gutmann and Alexander Koch, *Ladengestaltung / Shop Design*, Stuttgart: Verlagsanstalt Alexander Koch, 1956, pp. 118–21.

- 83 British historians have located the beginnings of consumer society in the eighteenth century in Britain (see, for example, the pioneering work of Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England*, London: Europa, 1982), but most historians agree that it was only in the United States after the First World War that a majority of the populace participated in the consumption of goods beyond the basic necessities and that this became possible in Europe only after 1945. For a summary of the debate, see Wolfgang König, 'Homo consumens: historische und systematische Betrachtungen', in Peter Lummel and Alexandra Deak, eds, *Einkaufen! Eine Geschichte des täglichen Bedarfs*, Berlin: Domäne Dahlem, 2005, pp. 189–201.
- 84 A relatively early and famous example of a critique of consumer society is Jürgen Habermas's 'Notizen zum Missverhältnis von Kultur und Konsum', *Merkur*, vol. 10 (1956), pp. 212–28.
- 85 See, for example, Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

6 The Museum and the New Media

- 1 C. R. Leslie, *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, ed. Andrew Shirley, London: Medici Society, 1937, p. 136.
- 2 Vischer quoted in James J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 143.
- 3 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum' [1955], in *Gesammelte Schriften: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* 1, vol. 10.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977, p. 181.
- 4 Boris Groys, *Logik der Sammlung: am Ende des musealen Zeitalters*, Munich: Carl Hanser, 1997, p. 7.

- 5 Thomas Keenan and John G. Hanhardt, eds, *The End(s) of the Museum*, Barcelona: Fundación Antoni Tàpies, 1996.
- 6 In 2005 a staggering 9,436 visitors per day attended the *Hokusai* exhibition at the Tokyo National Museum (see 'Exhibition Attendance Figures, 2005', *Art Newspaper*, no. 167, March 2005, pp. 11–20).
- 7 Groys, *Logik der Sammlung*, p. 7.
- 8 Boris Groys, 'Zur Ästhetik der Videoinstallation', in Peter Pakesch, ed., *Stan Douglas: Le Détroit*, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Basel, 2001, n. p.
- 9 See, for example, Rachel Greene, *Internet Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2004.
- 10 This is Julian Stallabras's argument in *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*, exh. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 2003.
- 11 Groys, *Logik der Sammlung*, pp. 19–20.
- 12 There was a large designated area with workstations at *Documenta 11* that invited visitors to linger and explore various Internet art projects.
- 13 Isaac Julien in 'Two Worlds: Face to Interface – Isaac Julien', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 33 (September 1999), p. 33.
- 14 The figures are taken from the Internet page of *Documenta 11*: www.documenta12.de/data/german/index.html (accessed 4 April 2006).
- 15 Only 11.5 per cent of the visitors bought a two-day pass. See www.documenta12.de/data/german/index.html (accessed 4 April 2006).
- 16 Frances Morris, senior curator at Tate Modern in London, confirmed that this was a new problem for curators (in discussion with Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh and Briony Fer, and moderated by Mark Godfrey, at the symposium *Art since 1900*, Tate Modern Auditorium, London, 4 April 2005).
- 17 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* [1976], expanded edn, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 111.
- 18 Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, vol. 5 (June 1967), pp. 12–23. Also in: Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York: Dutton, 1968, pp. 116–47. Fried began to elaborate his concepts historically in *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- 19 See, for example, Iwona Blazwick and Frances Morris, 'Showing the Twentieth Century', in Blazwick and Simon Wilson, eds, *Tate Modern: The Handbook*, London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000, pp. 28–39.
- 20 Roger M. Buerger in *Texte zur Kunst*, vol. 15, no. 59 (September 2005), p. 97.
- 21 Catherine David, *Middle East News: On Culture and Politics*, press release, Hebbel-am-Ufer, Berlin, 20 and 21 January 2006.
- 22 He has done this twice so far: once in 1996 in Cologne (see Udo Kittelmann, ed., *Rikrit Tiravanija: Untitled, 1996 (Tomorrow is Another Day)*, exh. cat., Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, 1996) and on another occasion in 2005 in London (see Rochell Steiner, ed., *Rikrit Tiravanija: A Retrospective (Tomorrow is Another Fine Day)*, exh. cat., Serpentine Gallery, London, 2005).
- 23 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 1998; as *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with Mathieu Copeland, Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002.
- 24 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 22.
- 25 Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 23.
- 26 Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, vol. 110 (Fall 2004), pp. 51–79.
- 27 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 13.
- 28 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, London: Mansell, 2004.
- 29 Historically, as I have argued elsewhere, Lilly Reich's important contribution to this mode of exhibition also means that women are not fundamentally excluded from this rational public sphere, another charge often levelled against Habermas's conception (Klonk, 'Patterns of Attention: From Shop Windows to Gallery Rooms in Early Twentieth-Century Berlin', *Art History*, vol. 28 (September 2005), p. 493).
- 30 Adolf Behne, 'Ausstellung der AHAG am Fischgrund', in Martin Wagner and Adolf Behne, eds, *Das neue Berlin*, Berlin: Verlag Deutsche Bauzeitung, 1929, p. 20.
- 31 Until 2006 Bourriaud was founding director of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, which was deliberately left in an unfinished state when it opened in 2002.
- 32 See, for example, most of the contributors to James Cuno, ed., *Whose Muse?: Art Museums and the Public Trust*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

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